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SHANDON BELLS.

CHAPTER I.

"OVER RUNNING WATER."

So STILL this night was. The white moonlight lay over the sleeping world; the Atlantic was calm; the little hamlet town of Inisheen, with all its picturesque squalor of quays and creeks and stranded boats, had gone to rest; and here, high up in this inland glen (from which the sea was visible only as a sharp line of silver at the horizon), among the felled trees and the brushwood, there was no sound save the continuous "hush—sh—sh" of the streamlet far below in the darkness. Nor was there any sign of life in this open glade—not even a rabbit out browsing on the dew-wet grass, or a curlew crossing the clear depths of the blue-gray sky in its flight from the moor to the shore. Only the moonlight shining calm and still on the wilderness of bramble and bracken and furze, and here and there on the white stump of a felled beech or ash; and always the murmur, down below, of the unseen rivulet on its way to the Blackwater and the sea.

But by and by, along the road over there, that was barred across by the shadows of some tall elms, two people came slowly walking, and the cheerful sound of their speaking was clear in the stillness.

"The more I think of it," said one of them, who was a very pretty, slightly formed young lady with eyes as black

as the sloe, a mouth that could assume a most piquant expression, and a voice that was soft and musical and laughing—"the more I think of it, this seems the most extraordinary escapade I ever entered upon. Altogether a most decorous proceeding! I suppose by this time every soul in Inisheen is fast asleep; and no doubt Miss Romaine is supposed to be asleep too and dreaming of the Conservatoire and her *début* at Covent Garden; while as for Master Willie, if he were to be missed, of course they'd imagine he was away after the wild-duck again, so it would be all right for him. Sure I think," she added, altering her voice slightly, and speaking very shyly—"sure I think 'tis I am the wild-duck that Masther Willie is afther."

"Do you know Kitty," said her companion, who was taller and fairer than she: a young fellow of two-and-twenty, perhaps, with light brown wavy hair, the shrewdest of clear blue eyes, and a well-set, slim figure—"do you know, Kitty, when you speak in our Irish way like that, my heart is just full of love for you."

"Oh, indeed!" she said, in a tone of surprise. "Oh, indeed! And at other times what is it full of, then?"

"Well, at other times," he said, "at other times, you see—well, at other times, Kitty, do you know, it is just full of love for you. Never mind, When I go to England I'll soon get rid of the Cork accent; and when I come back to you, Kitty——"

"Indeed you may save yourself the trouble," she interposed, promptly. "I am not going to have any stranger come back to me. I am going to have nobody but my wild Irish boy, with whatever accent he has, and with all the—the cheek he is not likely to get rid of anywhere. There's no other word for it, I declare. Such cheek as never was heard of! Do you know, sir, that I sang at the Crystal Palace with Titiens and Santley?"

"You've reminded me of it pretty often, Kitty," was the meek reply.

"Yes; and Miss Catherine Romaine, who has sent all Dublin wild with her singing of Irish songs, who could make engagements all over Ireland for the rest of her natural life, comes to Cork—to find herself patronised by the *Cork Chronicle*! The *Cork Chronicle*, indeed! And it isn't the editor, mind you, but only the sub-editor—does he sweep out the office too?—that has undertaken to sing the praises of Miss Romaine, and make the whole country

might as well get some independent testimony about the character of my husband that is to be. Oh, I assure you I was most discreet. Andy the Hopper, if that is his name, had very little notion why I wanted to know this or that about the Fitzgeralds, and especially about Mr. William Fitzgerald. Would you like to know how he described you, Willie?"

"If Andy the Hopper has been saying anything against me—I mean to you, Kitty—I'll beat the blackguard with his own pole till there's not an inch of whole skin on him," was her companion's decisive reply.

"'Is it Masther Willie ye mane?' he said. I said it was. 'Sure, miss, 'tis the duck's back that Masther Willie has got, and trouble runs off it like water. At the very end of the day if he was to lose the biggest salmon ever hooked in the Blackwater, d'ye think he'd be after sittin' down and cryin'?' Devil a bit—begging your pardon, miss. He'd be whistlin' the ould tunes as he put up the rod; and thin away home wid his spaches and his singing and his poethry, and a laugh and a joke for all the gyurls that he'd meet. Glory be to God, miss, but 'tis Masther Willie has the light heart.' But wait a moment, Master Willie. I thought that phrase about the gyurls a little singular—or rather it isn't singular, for it's plural. How many gyurls is an Irish young gentleman supposed to be in love with at the same time? Don't I know the song,—

'Here's a health to the girls that we loved long ago,
Where the Shannon, the Liffey, and Blackwater flow'?"

—Why 'girls'?"

"Why not, Kitty? The song is about the Irish Brigade. You wouldn't have the whole brigade in love with one?"

"I don't know; it sounds suspicious; and I suppose we are not more than a stone's-throw from the Blackwater now. But you may re-assure yourself, Master Willie. I was very discreet. I put no questions about the guryls to the gentleman in the red jacket; and so he went on to say you were a great sportsman, and to give me many stories of midnight adventures you and he had had after the wild-fowl."

"'Tis all over now, Kitty," said he, looking away
to the shallows and the mud-flats of the wide bay of
—, where many a time he had brought a mallard

thumping down, or listened to the clang of a string of wild-geese far overhead in the dark. "London is a terrible place to be alone in. I remember the first time I went there, and saw the miles and miles of streets and houses, and the strange faces, and the crowds hurrying and hurrying and hurrying. I said to myself I should lose heart altogether if I were to find myself alone in such a tremendous ocean, fighting to keep my head above water. Better the *Cork Chronicle*, and an ambition limited to the publishing of one small volume of poems some day, and, for the rest of it, over the bog after snipe or up the mountain after hares with Andy the Hopper. And then you must needs come along, Kitty, and spoil all my content. Even now I fear I am going to London against my better judgment. Having you, Kitty, what do I want with fame or money?"

"Stuff! I know you are fearfully ambitious, Master Willie, though you won't own it. Would you like to go on forever as the sub-editor of the *Cork Chronicle*? Would you have me keep singing away at concerts until my little share of good looks was gone, and then the public would discover there was nothing in my singing at all? I am certain your philosophy is all pretence. I don't believe Andy the Hopper a bit when he says you'd only whistle an ould tune or spake poethry after losing a big fish; I believe you would be much nearer crying with vexation. You don't impose on me, Master Willie; and we will see some day whether London is too big for you to fight."

"If it was the old times, Kitty, and I could start with a shield and a spear and your ribbon round my arm: that would be something like the thing. But at any rate I can carry your name in my heart."

She stopped and took his head in her two hands, and pulled it down and kissed him lightly on the forehead.

"That is where the victor's crown is to be," she said.

"I am not thinking of any victor's crown," said he. "I am thinking of the trip that you and I will make, every seven years, to this old place of Inisheen, and our going over the old walks again, and thinking of old times. And the day may come, Kitty, when getting down that bank may be too much for frail old limbs, and perhaps Fierna will excuse us, if we make the pilgrimage, to show him that we have not separated, even if we get down to the well."

"Seven years," she said, musingly. "It is a long time, Willie——"

But he did not hear her. He had stepped down to unmoor a small boat that lay half hidden in the shadow of a creek. When he was ready he called to her; and then he assisted her, with the most affectionate care, into the stern of the boat, and pulled her shawl close at the neck, and generally had her made comfortable. Then he took the oars, and in a few moments they had shot out into the broad and shallow and moonlit waters of the inner bay of Inisheen. As yet they could talk together openly without fear of being overheard from the shore; for Inisheen itself—a tumbled mass of houses and quays and vessels—lay away along there between them and the Atlantic.

"Besides," continued Miss Romaine, as if she had been resuming some argument, "you say yourself this is such a chance as you might never get again."

"Well, it is a chance," he answered, slowly pulling away at the short (and muffled) oars. "Fancy Hilton Clarke being in Inisheen, and no one knowing it."

"Perhaps they were all as wise as I was, Willie, and had never heard his name before."

"You must have heard his name, Kitty," he said, impatiently. "Why, he is one of the most distinguished men of letters in England."

"But what has he done, Willie?"

"Oh, everything," he said, rather confusedly. "Every one knows who he is. There is scarcely a better known name in contemporary literature."

"But what has he done, Willie? I might get it and read it, you know."

"Why, he is one of the greatest critics of the day—writes for all sorts of things: there is no one better known. He is said to have the finest judgment in literary matters of almost anybody living; and the reviews that he writes are always so scholarly, and—and full of happy ingenuities of expression—any one can recognize them——"

"Yes," said the pertinacious young lady with the pretty mouth and the soft dark eyes, "but hasn't he done anything himself? Hasn't he done any work of his own? Couldn't I buy a book of his to let me know something more of your wonderful hero?"

"Well, I believe he translated *Les Fleurs du Mal*—the original edition; but the book was privately printed."

"I am sure I never heard of it, in English or anything else," said she.

"Perhaps you never heard of Beaudelaire either, Kitty," said he, gently. "You see it would be easy for you to puzzle me about the distinguished people in music, I know so little about what's going on in music."

"Oh, very well," said she, good-naturedly, "let him be as distinguished as you like; that can't make him an agreeable-looking man."

"I consider him very handsome," he said, in astonishment.

"What! that lanky, supercilious, white-faced creature, with his stony stare?"

He burst out laughing.

"I do believe you're jealous, Kitty. Why, you only saw him for a second at the door of the Imperial, and you have never spoken to him. I consider him an extremely fine fellow, and the trouble he took about me—a perfect stranger to him—was quite extraordinary. It was indeed a chance, my running against him at all. You know, Kitty," said he—though there was a slight blush on his face—"I am not ashamed of my father keeping an inn, or a public house, or whatever you may call it—"

"An inn!" she exclaimed. "A public house! The Impayrial Hotel—the only hotel in Inisheen—to be talked of like that."

"—but all the same when I come here I don't go into the smoking-room. It is always filled with those Coursing Club people; and the Duke of Wellington 'wrenched, killed, and won like a hero'; and Sweetbrier was 'slow from the slips'; and Timothy 'scored first turn'; and Miss Maguire 'finished with the most lovely mill'; and all the rest of the jargon. Indeed I'd rather go to another inn, if there was one, when I come to Inisheen; but that might vex my father. Well, this stranger I didn't meet at the inn at all, but along the road, with his basket and rod and gaff all complete; and as we got talking about fishing, I looked over his fly-book for him—all sorts of fantastic nonsense got up in London to look pretty in a drawing-room. Then I offered to show him some flies. Then it turned out he was staying at the Imperial. And then we had a long evening together—all contrariwise; for I found out who he was, and I wanted to talk about all the literary men in London—and he seemed to know every one of

them; but he wanted to talk about nothing but river trout and sea trout and grilse and salmon, and the different rivers in the neighborhood. But it was a fine evening, all the same; and he showed himself most friendly—and has been so ever since, Miss Kitty, in his letters: And just fancy his asking me, a young newspaper fellow in Cork, to come and see him as soon as I got to London! If you only knew the position he holds—— But I think we'd better be quiet now, Kitty, until we get past the town."

Picturesque indeed was the old town of Inisheen on this beautiful night—the moonlight shining on the windows of the few houses on the side of the hill and on the gray gables along the harbor, and causing the golden cock on the top of the old Town-hall to gleam as if it were a repetition of the beacon-light far away there on the cliff overlooking the sea, while heavy masses of shadow lay over the various creeks and quays, where broad-bottomed vessels had found a berth in the ooze. But there was another Inisheen—an Inisheen of new and trim villas—that formed a fashionable watering-place fronting the open sea; and there it was that Miss Romayne lodged, and thither it was that Master Willie was stealthily rowing. Indeed, they soon drew away from the picturesque old town, and found before them the gently murmuring Atlantic, that broke in a fringe of silver foam all along the level sands.

And Miss Romayne was singing, too—not with the fine contralto voice that she could send ringing through a vast hall, but humming to herself, as it were, in a low and gentle fashion, "Farewell! but whenever you welcome the hour," and putting a good deal more pathos into the words than appears there if one reads them in cold blood. For she had a pathetic voice; and these two were alone under the shining heavens and on the beautiful calm sea; and they were young, and life and love were before them, and also the tragic misery of parting.

"I will bid you the real good-by to-night, Willie," she said, "and then I don't care for fifty Miss Patiences to-morrow. You must put me ashore at the jetty, and I will walk up alone. She is sure to be asleep. If not, then I was restless, and had to go out for a walk. And you will stop at the jetty, Willie, until you see me right up at the house, in case Don Fierna and his little people should snatch me up and carry me off to that dreadful glen."

"Why dreadful, Kitty? Are you sorry?"

“Oh no—not sorry. But there is something unholy about all that happened there. If that well were like the other wells about, that the saints have blessed, there would have been little bits of ribbon and suchlike offerings on the bushes. There was nothing of that kind *there*. I know I wouldn't go back alone to that valley for a million pounds.”

He rested one hand on the oars, and with the other reached over and took hers.

“But I hope neither you nor I, Kitty, will ever find ourselves there alone.”

He rowed in to the little jetty, and then stepped ashore, and assisted her to follow on to the gray stones. The leave-taking was a long one; there were many assurances and asseverations, and a little hysterical crying on her part. But at last the final good-by had to come, and he put a hand on each of her cheeks, and held her head, as though he would read to the bottom of those soft, beautiful, tear-bedimmed eyes.

“You will never forget—you can not forget—what you promised me to-night, when our hands were clasped over the stream?”

“Is it likely?” she said, sobbing violently. “Is it likely I shall forget, any single day as long as I live?”

Then she went away alone, and he waited, and watched the solitary slight little figure go along the moonlit road, and up to the house. There was a flutter of a white handkerchief; he returned that signal. He waited again; there was no sign. So he got into the boat again, and rowed silently away to Inisheen harbor, like one in a dream.

Only a moonlight night, and the parting of two lovers. And yet sometimes such things remain visible across the years.

CHAPTER II.

A HIGH CONCLAVE

THAT was an eventful evening in the life of young Fitzgerald when he made his way, not without some inward tremor, to the Albany, in order to dine with Mr. Hil-

ton Clarke. For not only was that high honor in store for him, but moreover this new friend, who had been exceedingly kind to him in many ways, had promised he should also meet Mr. Gifford, the editor of the *Liberal Review*. Imagine a boy-lieutenant just joined asked to dine with the Commander-in-Chief and his staff! Away in that provincial newspaper office, Master Willie had been accustomed to regard the London *Liberal Review* as perhaps the wisest and most original and honest of modern journals: he had many a time clipped out its opinions and quoted them prominently in the *Cork Chronicle*; he had even from week to week studied the way of writing that characterized its columns. And here he was to meet the editor in actual flesh and blood! To listen to the great critic and the great journalist at once! Moreover, he could not help suspecting that Hilton Clarke had arranged this meeting lest peradventure it might be of some service, near or remote, to the young aspirant. He did not know what he had done to deserve such kindness, such good fortune. How had it all come about? So far as he could see, merely through his happening to know what were the best salmon flies for the Blackwater.

Of course he arrived too soon, and so had plenty of time to saunter up and down the echoing little thoroughfare, and master the lettering and numbering of the buildings. But when at last he made his way up the stone staircase to the door on the first landing, and was met by a tall middle-aged woman with a foreign-looking cap on her head, who, in broken English, showed him where to leave his hat and coat, and then ushered him into an apartment the like of which he had never seen in his life before, he began to ask himself if he had not made a mistake. Perhaps he would again have demanded of the black-eyed, soft-voiced, grave person if Mr. Hilton Clarke lived there, but she had gone. However, it was clear that some one was going to dine in this room, for in the middle of it was a small square table very daintily laid out, and lit by a lamp with a pink and white porcelain shade that threw a soft rosy glow around. So at haphazard he sat down, and proceeded to gaze with a sort of awe at the wonderful chamber, the treasures in which, if he had known anything about them, he would have perceived to have come from all parts of the world, but mostly from Venice. From Venice had come the row of lustrous copper water vessels

that had been transformed into big flower-pots, and ranged along there on the little balcony outside the French windows; also the quaint and delicate white and gold chairs and couches that were now dim with age; and perhaps, too, the framed chalice-cloth over the chimney-piece, the beautiful rich embroidery of which appeared to be falling away by its own weight from the frail silken ground. But there was a large inlaid Spanish cabinet in scarlet and lacquered brass that was itself a blaze of color; and there were Kirwan rugs scattered about the floor; and on the walls were gorgeous masses of Turkish embroidery; likewise a series of candles in sconces, over each of which was hung a piece of Hispano-Moresque pottery, the red glow from these large dishes completing the barbaric splendor of the place. For the rest, there was a good deal of Moorish metal and ivory work about; but there was not a picture nor an engraving on the walls, nor a book nor a newspaper anywhere.

Presently a door opened, and Hilton Clarke appeared.

"How are you, Fitzgerald? Glad to see you."

There was a moment's pause.

"Oh, will you excuse me for a second?"

As he disappeared into the bedroom again, a mighty qualm shot to the heart of young Fitzgerald. His host was in evening dress. He glanced at the table, which was laid out for four: no doubt the other two guests would be in evening dress also! The mere thought of it was agony. It was not that they might consider him a country bumpkin; it was that they might think him failing in due respect to themselves. He had had no idea that London men of letters lived like this. Even if he had brought his rusty old suit of evening dress from Ireland, he would probably never have thought of putting it on to go to dinner at a bachelor's rooms. He wished himself a hundred miles away from the place. He ought never to have accepted an invitation to meet great people until he had himself done something. It served him right for his presumption. And would they think it was out of disrespect? Would it be better for him to explain and apologize? Or to make some excuse now, and get rapidly away?

In a very few minutes his host appeared again—in morning costume.

"I think you're right, Fitzgerald," he said, carelessly,

as he flung himself into an easy chair. "A shooting coat will be more comfortable; it's got quite chilly to-night."

Fitzgerald's heart leaped up with gratitude. Was not this, he asked himself, the action of a true gentleman—an action prompted by an instinctive courtesy quick to take into consideration the feelings of others? He was half inclined to be angry with Kitty—poor Kitty who was so far away! But he would write to her: he would challenge her to say whether this little bit of courtesy, trifling as it might appear, was not a safe indication of character.

And it must be confessed that Kitty was quite wilfully wrong when she refused to perceive that her lover's new acquaintance was handsome, and even distinguished looking. He was a man of about thirty, tall, sparely built; his head well set on square shoulders, his features refined and pensive somewhat, with eyes of a clear light blue, and calm and contemplative; blonde hair and beard (which he wore somewhat long), and hands of extreme whiteness and elegance. His beautifully shaped nails, indeed, occupied a good deal of his attention; and as he now lay back in the easy chair, he was contemplating them rather than the young man he was addressing.

"There are some pretty things in the room, aren't there?" he said, in a tone of indifference, though he still regarded his nails with care. "They are a bit too violent in color for me. I like repose in a room. But the capitalist will be impressed."

"I beg your pardon?" said Fitzgerald (how glad he was about that business of the shooting coat!)

"Oh!" he continued, in the same indifferent kind of way, "I forgot I hadn't told you. There's a man coming here to-night who has too much money. It isn't right for a man to have so much money. I think I can induce him to risk a little of it in a journalistic venture—I think so; I don't know: the thing looks to me promising enough. Only I thought my capitalist would be impressed with a little grandeur; and so I rented these rooms for a time. I don't want you to think that all that scarlet and red pottery kind of thing is what I should prefer. I like repose in a room, as I say; something to quiet the eyes when you are tired. Then the other man you will meet—oh, I told you—Gifford. What a comical old cock he is!"

Fitzgerald could scarce credit his ears. The editor of

the *Liberal Review* to be spoken of in this familiar and patronizing way!

"The odd thing is," continued Hilton Clarke, as he slowly opened and shut a pencil-case with his beautiful long nails, "that he has been able to get round about him a lot of writers who are exactly like himself, or who pretend to be. They are all fearfully in earnest; and dogmatic about trifles; making the most profound discoveries in new poets, new actresses, new politicians; always professing to be exceedingly accurate, and never able to quote three figures without a blunder. The whole thing is comical; but the public believe them to be so sincere. To me they seem to be continually wandering in a fog; and one stumbles against a lamp-post, and shrieks out: 'My gracious goodness, if this isn't the greatest genius of a poet since the time of Byron!' and another tumbles on to the pavement where a beggar has been drawing chalk pictures, and there's a wild cry from him too: 'Heaven preserve my poor senses if this isn't Carpaccio come back again! How can I express my emotion but in tears!' I am told Gifford's last theory is that political disturbances have the same origin as terrestrial disturbances; the earth suffering from a surfeit of electricity, don't you know, or some such thing, and firing off one-half of it as an earthquake at Valparaiso, and the other half of it at the same moment as an insurrection among the Poles. Different forms of gas, I suppose. I wonder, when a number of the *Liberal Review* is published here, what portentous explosion takes place at the other side of the world. But there's one good point about old Gifford: he is always very frank in apologizing for his blunders. You generally find him saying, 'Last week we inadvertently mentioned Lord Russell as having been principally concerned in the abolition of the Corn Laws; of course every one must have seen that we meant the Duke of Wellington.' And then the following week, 'We last week, by a slip of the pen, attributed the establishment of Free Trade to the Duke of Wellington; every one must have seen that we meant Sir Robert Peel.' I only hope he'll take it into his head to discover a mare's nest in this new weekly I am thinking of, and give us a flaming article about it; it's all a toss-up whether he does or not."

Fitzgerald heard all this with dismay, and even with a trifle of pain. He was a born hero-worshipper; and for this unknown editor, whose opinions he had revered for

many a year, he had a very high regard indeed. It was almost shocking to hear him spoken of as a comical person. But the truth was that Fitzgerald did not understand that there was a spice of revenge in this tirade uttered so negligently. Only that morning it had happened that a good-natured friend had repeated to Mr. Hilton Clarke something that had been said of him by Mr. Gifford. The good-natured friend did not in the least mean to make mischief; it was only a little joke; and indeed there was nothing very terrible in what Mr. Gifford had said. "Clarke? Hilton Clarke, do you mean? Oh, he is the sort of man who writes triolets, parts his hair down the middle, and belongs to the Savile Club." Now there is no one of these things absolutely criminal; in fact, a man might commit them all and still be recognized as an honest British citizen. Only Mr. Hilton Clarke did not like to be ticketed and passed on in that way; and so he took his earliest opportunity of revenge.

He looked at his watch.

"Five minutes past eight," he said. "Twenty minutes late already. I never wait more than a quarter of an hour for anybody; so we will have dinner. Fiammetta! Hola! —Fiammetta!"

There was no answer, so he touched a little silver-handled bell near him; and the tall dark-eyed woman—she seemed to have been very beautiful at one time, Fitzgerald thought, as he now had a better look at her—made her appearance.

"L'on n'arrive pas; faites servir."

"Bien, m'sieur."

But at the same moment there was a noise outside in the passage, and very shortly afterward Fiammetta ushered in two gentlemen. The first, who was rubbing his hands, and looking very cheerful, was a portly, rubeund, blonde person, whose short yellow mustache and whiskers looked almost white as contrasted with his round, red, shining face; he wore one blazing diamond as a stud; and his boots shone almost as brilliantly as the diamond did. Him Fitzgerald instantly dismissed as of no account, and concentrated his eager interest on the next comer, who was certainly of more striking appearance. He was a man of middle height, of powerful build; his face sallow; his hair jet-black and unkempt; his features strong, and yet keen and intellectual; his eyes so very clear, in the midst of a dark face, that they

resembled the eyes of a lion. The general impression you would have gathered from his look was that he was an intellectually powerful man, but unduly aggressive; though this impression was modified by his voice, which was pleasant, and by his laugh, which was delightful.

After the usual apologies and introductions, and when Hilton Clarke had expressed his regret that these two guests should have taken the trouble to come in evening dress (if Kitty had only seen how nicely that was done! they sat down to the little square table; and Fiammetta, having handed round a dish containing caviare, olives stuffed with sardines, and similar condiments, offered to each of the guests his choice of liqueurs. As Fitzgerald had never heard any of the names before—and as he was far more interested in his companions than in the ministrations of the soft-eyed and velvet-footed Fiametta—he absently answered, “Yes, if you please,” and did not even look at the reddish-colored fluid that was poured into his glass. A minute afterward he was brought to his senses. Having observed the results of certain Coursing Club dinners at Inisheen, he had long ago vowed to himself never to touch spirits of any kind; and he had faithfully kept his vow. But he never imagined that this reddish fluid could be anything else than wine, and not particularly liking the oily taste of the caviare, he thought he would remove it by drinking this glass. The next moment he was convinced that the roof of his head was off, and his throat on fire. He hastily gulped down some water; fortunately he did not choke; no one noticed; and by and by, somewhat panting, and very red in the face, he was enabled to resume his attitude of respectful and eager attention.

The conversation was entirely confined to Hilton Clarke and Mr. Gifford; Mr. Scobel, the capitalist, being a most valiant trencher-man, minded his own business. And indeed for some time the remarks on affairs of the day and on the doings of public men were somewhat obvious and commonplace, if one may dare to say so; although here and there occurred a suggestion that these two men had very different ways of looking at things. However, all the assertion was on the side of Mr. Gifford, whenever any disputable subject was approached. His host did not care to contradict. He would rather make some little facetious remark, or shrug his shoulders. Gifford’s attitude was one of conviction and insistence; Clarke’s might have been

summed up in the word "*connu*." When the leonine gentleman was vehemently declaring that the laureate's last volume, which had been published that very week, was a masterpiece; that never before had he written anything so consistently dramatic in its conception, so musical in its lyrics, so pathetic in its tragedy: and that in consequence life seemed to have had something added to it within these last few days, his host remarked—while carefully looking for bones in the red mullet—"Oh yes, it is a pleasant sort of poem."

But by dire mishap, they blundered into the American civil war, which was then a topic of more recent interest than it is now. At first the remarks were only casual, and perhaps also not profoundly novel.

"At all events," said Hilton Clarke at last, "there is one point on which everybody is agreed—that the Southerners have the advantage of being gentlemen."

"The gentlemen of the Salisbury stockade—the gentlemen of Andersonville!" retorted his opponent, with a flash in the deep-set gray eyes.

"And they fought gallantly too, until they were beaten back by the undisciplined crowds that poured down on them—flung at them, indeed, by reckless generals who knew no more of the art of war than they did of common humanity. Of course, if you have every advantage of men and money and war material—"

But this was like the letting in of waters. Even Mr. Scobell looked up. For the *Liberal Review* had been a warm partisan of the North during the war; and Mr. Gifford had written nearly all of the war articles himself, so that his information, whether precisely accurate or not, was of mighty volume; and down it came on the head of his opponent like a cataract. All the campaigns had to be fought over again: now they were investing Vicksburg; now they were marching through Georgia; now they were at Five Forks. Hilton Clarke appeared to have gone away somewhere. He was scarcely heard amid all this thunder. At times, it is true, he would utter some scornful taunt, not levelled at the North only, but at North and South combined; for indeed he might well be confused by all the gunpowder smoke and noise. But even here he was not safe; for having incidentally remarked that it was not worth disputing about, "for, after all," he said, "there are only two kinds of Americans, plain and colored, and for my part I

prefer the colored variety," he was immediately pursued by his relentless enemy, who upbraided him for making use of those idle little quips and taunts that made such mischief between countries. The flippant article was very easy to write; and the writer pocketed his three guineas; and then it went out and was quoted all over America as an expression of English jealousy. He undertook to say that Clarke had never been in America; he undertook to say that he had never known twenty Americans in the whole course of his life——

Now there is no saying how far this discussion might have gone, or how fierce it might have become; but Mr. Scobell made a remark. And when a capitalist speaks, literary persons are silent.

"I was once in America," he said.

There was a pause.

"Oh, indeed," said Mr. Gifford, regarding him with interest.

"Yes?" said his host, with a pleasant and inquiring smile.

But it appeared that that was all. He had contributed his share to the conversation; and accordingly he returned to his plate. Moreover, what he had contributed was valuable; it was actual fact, which there was no gainsaying.

But whatever interest this dispute may have had for young Fitzgerald as indicative of the characters of the disputants (that is to say, supposing him to have had the audacity to attempt to take the measure of two such distinguished men), what followed turned out to have a far more immediate and personal importance for him. The champagne, which had been rather long in coming, had now been passed round twice by the soft-footed Fiammetta; a mellower atmosphere pervaded the room; Mr. Gifford was laughing pleasantly at a little joke of his host's; and the round, clear, staring eyes of the capitalist—whose face, by the way, had grown even a little redder, so that the short yellow-white whiskers and mustache and eyebrows looked as if they were afire—beamed in the most benign manner on all and sundry. This was the time chosen by Mr. Hilton Clarke to unfold the journalistic scheme which had been the *fons et origo* of this little dinner party.

"You see, I want your advice, Gifford," he said, "and Mr. Scobell won't mind my repeating some details that he and I have gone over together. What I propose is a

shilling weekly — addressed to the wealthier classes, of course, but rather with a view to country houses. However, I should publish at three o'clock on Saturday, so that London people could have the magazine by post, while the country people would get it in their Sunday morning bag. There might be a summary of Reuter's telegrams up to the latest hour on Saturday; otherwise, no news; and above all, no politics. The prominence given to politics in English newspapers is founded on a delusion—wait a minute, Gifford; let me have my scheme out. I say that the space given to politics in the newspapers is out of all proportion to the interest taken in politics by any ordinary English household. Outside political circles—I mean apart from those who are actually concerned in politics or in writing about them—take any household you like, and for one who is deeply interested in politics, you will find four who don't care a brass farthing about them. Well, I propose to address the four. But even the fifth, mind you, though he may imagine himself responsible for the empire, might have anxious thoughts as to whether he should take such and such a deer forest in Scotland for the autumn, or whether he should hire a steam-yacht and take his family for a cruise about the Channel Islands, or whether, supposing he took such and such a country house from October till Christmas, there would be as many pheasants this year as figured in last year's bag, and so on; and he might be very glad, on the Sunday morning, to sit down with his after-breakfast cigar in the veranda, you know, and study this honest shilling counsellor—”

“Oh,” said Gifford, “that kind of thing. But there is the *Field*. There is *Land and Water*—”

“Pardon me, this will be quite different,” said Hilton Clarke, composedly. “I propose to have a series of agents — yachting men, sportsmen, anglers, and all the rest of it—who will at their leisure send in faithful and unadorned descriptions of anything they find that is worth having; so that Paterfamilias, instead of reading advertisements that he can't believe, will have a lot of things offered to him—a brace of perfectly disciplined setters, a thoroughbred hunter, half a mile of salmon fishing in Ireland, a shooting-box in the Highlands, anything, in short, connected with those delightful dreams of holidays that fill up the idle time on Sundays with so many folk; and he will know that he can safely depend on these being as they are de-

scribed. In fact, I don't know that we might not have a number of supernumerary agents, so that a man, writing to the office, could have one of these sent on commission, and so make sure, for example, that the fine bag he had heard of as having been made last year on a particular shooting did not mean that the outgoing tenant had cleared every head of game off the place. The difficulty will be to get perfectly trustworthy agents. We shall be above suspicion, for we shall take no fees, no commissions. The men must be well paid—"

"Right," said Scobell, and there was instant attention. But that was all. He looked from one to the other in silence; he had said all he had thought necessary to say.

"My dear Gifford, not an ortolan?" Hilton Clarke observed, with calm surprise. "Fitzgerald, pass the Burgundy—gently, man!" he added, in a tone of displeasure, for Fitzgerald had gripped the basket with his muscular fingers as if it were the stock of a breech loader. "And for this section," he continued, "of course what is wanted is a good sub-editor, who will put the reports into decent English, and who won't let the printers make a fool of us. Besides, he must know something of out-of-door sports—he must know a good deal more than I do—or we shall be made ridiculous. I think it was rather lucky, then, that I ran against my friend Fitzgerald here, for if you can persuade him, Mr. Scobell, to take the place, he is the very man for it. He has burned powder in those desolate Irish bogs, and I know he can busk a fly. And then, you see, Fitzgerald, it needn't take up anything like the whole of your time. You might be going on with more purely literary work quite independently of it. What do you say?—or would you rather consider?"

"Oh, I should be very glad," stammered Fitzgerald, with his face about as red as Mr. Scobell's. "It is very kind of you. I—I don't know whether I could do the work, but I should try my best, anyway—"

"Oh, that's all right," said Hilton Clarke, coolly. "I dare say you know more about it than I do. As to terms, perhaps this isn't the place to discuss these details—"

But here Mr. Scobell broke in. Here he had a right to speak, and here he was on solid ground.

"I leave that in your hands, Clarke. I leave that to you entirely. I want the paper well done. I want it to be a gentlemanly paper. I don't want to go into my club and

have a man come up to me and say, 'Scobell, what d——d Radical trash that is in your paper! I wonder you'd own a d——d Radical paper!' I want it to be a gentlemanly paper, and I am willing to pay for it. I want it to be well printed, on good paper; I want it to be a gentlemanly looking paper; I don't want, when I go into sassiety, to have people speaking of me as the owner of a d——d Radical print."

"Oh, of course not—of course not," said Hilton Clarke, somewhat hastily. "There will be no politics. But we must have a name. I have bothered my head for the last fortnight about it. You see, I must have it known that the paper is for Sunday morning or for Sunday; but everything I have tried suggests the *Sunday at Home* or the *Day of Rest*, or something like that. I thought of the *Sunday Morning Cigar*; but then everybody doesn't smoke. The *After-Breakfast Cigar; a Sunday Paper*; that has the same objection. The *Country Gentleman's Guide*; that is too long; besides, I want to appeal to the whole household, and to town households also. Well, we must consider that by and by."

"If I were you, I would call it *Jeshurun*," said Mr. Gifford. "It seems to me you are addressing those who have waxed fat, and taking account only of the most material and vulgar luxuries. There is not a word of any intellectual requirements——"

"Oh, I beg your pardon," his host said. "I have only described one section to you. I mean to take the literary section under my own care. Of course we shall have essays; touching here and there on sport, perhaps, but also meant to have an interest for the ladies in the house. A short story now and again, if possible; but it is difficult to get them good; it might be better to have some French novel—such as *Monsieur De Camors*—translated, and use that as a serial. An occasional bit of verse, too, or a *ballade*, touching affairs of the day. Professor Jewel has offered me a series of translations from Horace partly adapted to modern affairs; but I am afraid that has been done too often."

"Don't touch them," said Gifford, with decision. "Horace is as fatal to translators as Heine. Both are quite unmanageable. Look how Milton made a fool of himself with the fifth Ode!"

“What?” said Mr. Scobell, in a loud voice; and even Fitzgerald stared.

“Come, you must not speak slightingly of the equator,” Hilton Clarke said, with a laugh.

“Oh, but I do say it is the very worst translation ever made from Horace, or from anybody else,” Mr. Gifford insisted. “It is not a question of degree. I say it is the very worst translation ever made from anything; for it starts with the primary defect of being absolutely unintelligible. Do you mean to tell me that anybody unacquainted with the original could make the slightest sense out of it—

‘Who now enjoys thee credulous, all gold;
Who always vacant, always amiable,
Hopes thee, of fluttering gales
Unmindful!’”

Gracious heavens! And then the measure—

“Who now enjoys thee credulous, all gold?”

I should like to see a schoolboy try to make that scan, to say nothing of ‘credulous, all gold,’ certainly leaving in the mind the impression that if anybody is all gold, it is not Pyrrha at all, but the credulous youth. Now the gentleman who translated Gretchen’s song thus,—

‘My peace is gone,
My heart is sore,
I find him never
And nevermore,’

erred in the other direction, for he wanted to make it quite clear what poor Gretchen was sorrowing about and only took a liberty with a little *sic*.”

“But what do you think of this project now, Gifford?” said Hilton Clarke, as he handed round cigars, coffee being on the table.

Mr. Gifford took a cigar, lay back in his chair, and passed his hand through the thick masses of his raven-black hair.

“Not much,” said he, firmly. “You are combining opposed tastes. Sportsmen are not as a rule fond of intellectual pursuits. Where you find the library in a country-house turned into a gun-room, there will be more newly made cartridges than newly published books about. A combination of Colonel Hawker and Joseph Addison——”

"But, my dear fellow, you don't seem to see that I am addressing different persons. I am addressing the whole household—the father, who wants to invite Lord Somebody or other to shoot with him over a thoroughly well preserved moor in Scotland; the eldest son, who hunts; the younger son, who wants to cut a dash at Cowes; the mamma, who has her eye on several parties she could make up if only she had a pleasant country house for the winter; the young ladies, who would be curious about a translated French novel, as they are forbidden to read such things in the original. You see I am appealing to the whole household——"

"Call it the *Household Magazine*, then," said Gifford, with a laugh.

"I will. Thanks," said Hilton Clarke, calmly, as he took out a beautifully bound little note-book. "At least that is better than anything I have thought of as yet."

And so Master Willie was installed as the sub-editor of a shilling weekly magazine. But that was not the only event of the evening, so far as concerned himself. After talking about many things, until the gorgeous colors of the chamber were pretty well subdued by a haze of pale blue tobacco smoke, they chanced to touch on a novel which had just then been published by a gentleman holding a subordinate place in her Majesty's government. Rather, it had been published some weeks before, anonymously, and no notice had been taken of it; now, however, a second edition was announced, with the name of the Right Honorable Spencer Tollemache, M.P., on the title-page. Then editors had to begin and overhaul the piles of books put aside as adjudged not worth a review, and so *Daphne's Shadow* came to the front again.

"Curious idea for Spencer Tollemache to write a novel," said Hilton Clarke. "His *History of the '32 Reform Bill* was very well spoken of."

"Ah; light literature—relaxation—relaxation," said Mr. Scobell, smiling blandly—"relaxation from the cares of state."

Gifford darted an almost angry glance at him.

"Light literature?" he said, somewhat too scornfully. "I suppose you mean light literature as distinguished from the heavy literature that sinks? My dear Mr. Scobell, where are the politicians of the time of Homer? Where are the learned treatises *they* wrote? It seems to me that light literature—imaginative literature—pure story-telling

—absolute fiction—is the only really permanent thing of man's invention in the world. The *Siege of Troy*, the *Wanderings of Ulysses*, the *Arabian Nights*, Shakspeare's plays, *Don Quixote*, *Robinson Crusoe*, the *Vicar of Wakefield*—more than that, the children's fairy tales that have an antiquity beyond anything that can be guessed at—all pure fiction—these are the things that remain; these are the things that the whole world treasures; while your heavy literature sinks into the bog."

He was quite as vehement about this chance topic as he had been about the American war.

"You may call them will-o'-the-wisps, if you like; they are not to be caught and cooked; but they remain to delight the curiosity and imagination of men, flickering and beautiful; while far more useful works—solid and substantial works—have gone down into the morass, and the centuries have closed over them. People see too much of the meaner side of what is around them; they wish to hear of nobler things; they like a touch of rose-color, of the wonderful, the supernatural, added to the common things of life. If a child had never been told about fairies, it would invent fairies. And you talk of Spencer Tollemache as turning to this kind of work for relaxation? Perhaps he may. I never read his *History of the Reform Bill*; but if he thinks it easier to create imaginary human beings, and give them definite and natural form, and make them the brothers and sisters and intimate friends of the people who are actually alive in the world—if he thinks it is easier to do that than to go to Parliamentary reports and Blue-books and get together a useful compilation of easily ascertained facts, then perhaps he may find himself mistaken. Perhaps he has already found himself mistaken. By Jove! it's eleven o'clock."

Good luck seemed to pursue Fitzgerald this evening. When Mr. Scobell drove away in his carriage, the remaining two guests left together on foot; and as they walked along Piccadilly, Mr. Gifford must needs continue talking about the Under-Secretary's novel and the capitalist's chance remark. You may imagine that young Fitzgerald was in no hurry to interrupt him. To be walking with Mr. Gifford was a sufficient honor; to listen to this vehement, combative, and occasionally brilliant and incisive talk was something that the provincial sub-editor had never dared to hope for in this world. They walked all the way to

Sloane Street (Master Willie would have kept on to Jerusalem, had not his companion stopped), when Mr. Gifford said to him:—

“You live in the Fulham Road, you said? My rooms are close by here. I have have been thinking now that if you didn’t mind trying your hand at a review of that novel I was speaking of, you might let me have it by Thursday night. Hilton Clarke showed me some things of yours. You are on the right road; don’t fall in with that affected indifferentism; you’ll find too much of it in London. Remember Bishop Blougram:—

‘What can I gain on the denying side?
Ice makes no conflagration.’

Your writing isn’t quite clean enough yet. You go round-about. You don’t hit the nail sharp and have done. No matter; if you like to try your hand, you may have the book.”

“But,” said Fitzgerald, almost deprived of breath, “but you don’t mean for the *Liberal Review*?”

“Of course I do.”

Now if at this moment the pavement at the corner of Sloane Street had opened, and if Master Willie had beheld there a subterranean procession of Don Fierna and all his array of elves—passing along in blue fire through grottoes of feldspar gemmed with rubies and diamonds—he could not have been more astounded. That he should be asked to write for the *Liberal Review*; and to write about a book, too, that was at the moment occupying so much of the attention of the public! He could scarcely find words to express his sense of his companion’s great kindness, and of his own fears about his being unable to undertake such a task.

“But I don’t say I will use the article, mind,” said Mr. Gifford, good-naturedly. “I will give you the chance, if you will take the risk. It may be some training for you, in any case. If you call or send to the office to-morrow, you will find the book waiting for you. Good-night. Glad to have met you.

Was Kitty awake yet? Could she hear the news? Could she tell how high his heart was beating?—poor Kitty, who was so far away at Inisheen!

CHAPTER III.

A FIRST CAST.

FITZGERALD did not get to sleep soon that night. As he walked rapidly away down the Fulham Road, it seemed to him as if five-and-thirty different ways of beginning this fateful review were pressing in on his mind, and that he had lost all power to decide which was preferable. If he could have seen but the first page of the novel, it might have given him some clue, perhaps. But here he was eagerly and anxiously sketching out plans for reviewing a book of the contents of which he was wholly ignorant; and it appeared to him as if his brain had got the better of him altogether, and was running ahead in this aimless, distracted, and fruitless fashion quite independently of his control.

At length he reached a dimly lit little courtyard in the Fulham Road, on one side of which stood a plain two-storied building. The ground-floor consisted of a large studio; the upper floor served as a bedroom, and that Fitzgerald had secured as his lodging. He went carefully up the outside stair, unlocked the door, lit a match and then a lamp, and here he was in the middle of a fairly large low roofed apartment, somewhat scantily furnished, but quite sufficiently so for all his wants. The floor was for the most part bare; and here and there was a bit of faded Turkey carpet or a withered old rug which had most likely been flung out from the studio below as being even too worn and decayed for painting purposes.

It was a fine place to think in, for there were few temptations in the way of luxury about; and he had plenty to think of: the projected magazine; Kitty's surprise on hearing the good news; the wonderful evening he had just spent, and the strange contrast between the two great men; nay, the precise conversation of which he could remember every word: all these things were enough to occupy him; but nearer than any of them came this pressing matter of the review. What a chance it was! And they said

that London was an unfriendly city! Now it could not be any interest in salmon flies that had led Mr. Gifford to place this opportunity before one who was quite unknown to him. True, Mr. Gifford had seen certain excerpts from the *Cork Chronicle* which Mr. Hilton Clarke had asked to be intrusted with. (N.B.—What would Kitty say to this? Was not that the act of a friend?) But Fitzgerald had a great distrust of himself; he had not regarded these things as of much value; and certainly he had never thought they would entitle him to have the chance given him of contributing to the *Liberal Review*.

At this moment all his thinking went clean out of his head; for there was a tremendous noise below—the noise of a powerful, raucous bass voice that bellowed, or rather that rattled with the rattle of small drums,—

Should auld acquaintance be forrrrr-got—

“There’s that brute begun again,” said Fitzgerald to himself with a groan.

But the brute, wherever he was, seemed to have no intention of continuing the song. There was a dead silence, in the course of which Fitzgerald speedily recovered his thoughts again.

And first of all he was determined that, if the book gave him any fair excuse, the review should be a friendly and good-natured one. For he had carefully noted certain remarks (what had he not carefully noted during the momentous evening?) that Mr. Gifford had addressed to Hilton Clarke with regard to the projected magazine.

“For one thing, my friend,” Mr. Gifford had said bending his keen eyes on the tall blonde-bearded gentleman opposite him, “I would advise you in going over to this new thing, to leave behind you the affected pessimism of the *Weekly Gazette*.” (This was a weekly journal to which Mr. Hilton Clarke was understood to contribute.) “That continual belittling of things, that continual discontent with everything that turns up in politics, or literature, or art, does not pay. It is not wise. When the public find you always discontented, always looking at the hopeless side of things, always declaring that everything is going to the bad, they begin to suspect that you have reason for this discontent—in other words, that your circulation is decreasing. Now that is a fatal impression.

Besides, people will not read a paper that fills them with gloom. Nor can you bully the public with impunity. It is no use attacking them, and scolding them, or treating them with scorn and contempt. You see, the public have simply to leave you unread, and that is a terrible business; for then, you perceive you can not hurt them, but they do hurt you."

"I should have thought," said Hilton Clarke, with a gentle smile, "that the circulation of the *Weekly Gazette* was some what bigger, a little bit bigger, than that of the *Liberal Review*."

"Yes; no doubt no doubt," said the other, cheerfully, "though I am in hopes of seeing their relative positions reversed some day. But that is my advice to you. That tone of disappointment with everything makes people begin to think that you are not getting on as well as you might be; and that is very bad. Then the advertisers. Mind you, the advertisers are also vertebrate animals, and they make up a considerable proportion of the public. And if you go on from week to week declaring that British tradesmen are universally swindlers, that railway directors should be indicted for wilful murder, and so forth, mind you, your advertising agent may have a bad time of it. Say he goes into a big cutlery place in Oxford Street. The foreman goes up to the master: 'Here is the advertisement man from the *Weekly Gazette*, sir. He wants us to take the outside page next week.' Then very likely the cutler may turn round and say; 'The *Weekly Gazette* be hanged! Tell him that swindling isn't paying well just now, and we can't advertise. Swindlers, indeed! Swindlers themselves! The *Weekly Gazette* be hanged!'"

Now this advice, though it seemed to young Fitzgerald at the time to be not quite in accordance with the *ruat cælum* principles professed by the *Liberal Review* (which was a very courageous and vehement and plain-spoken organ), nevertheless appeared to him to be sound and sensible. Accordingly, he now resolved that, if the merits of the book permitted it at all, he would treat it in the most friendly fashion. Instead of scourging him with rods from out the groves of Academe, the *Liberal Review* would take this new disciple by the hand, and encourage him, and bid him be of good cheer. Or what if the book were very good indeed, and altogether beyond need of patronage? Then let literature be congratulated on this new ad-

hesion. Fitzgerald remembered that the *Liberal Review* was rather fond of making discoveries. No reviews of the book, at least of any importance, had appeared, though people were talking enough about it. Might not he be the first to announce the advent of a new power in literature? If he only had the book—here—at once—

“*And never brought to mind?*”

Again came the giant roar from below. And what a tenacious memory the musician must have! was Fitzgerald’s first thought, ten minutes certainly having elapsed since he sung the first line. And surely there must be some shaft or opening in the floor; otherwise the sound could not come through in such volume. And what if perchance that shaft should be over the musician’s head, on which a bucket of water might be made to descend suddenly at the next bellow?

But there was to be no more bellowing, except, indeed, a verse of the national anthem, which Fitzgerald had already learned to recognize as the token that the artist was about to retire for the night, pleased or not, as the case might be, with his work. “*Go-o-o-d save the Queen!*” roared the deep bass voice in dying cadence; then there was a curious clamping and shuffling, as if some one were doing a heel-and-toe step on a wooden floor; then silence. Either the artist was having a final pipe, or he had gone to bed.

Next morning eleven o’clock was the earliest hour at which Fitzgerald deemed it fitting he should go to the office of the *Liberal Review* for the book; and even then he did not think it probable that Mr. Gifford could have sent a message so soon. To his surprise, however, there the precious parcel was awaiting him; and so eager was he to see what sort of material this was on which he was to operate that the moment he got on the top of the first passing Fulham omnibus he hastily undid the parcel, put two volumes in his pocket, and proceeded to cut the leaves of the other. He glanced over the first page or two—very good: a sort of playful introduction, light, facetious, well written; in short, a clever little essay about a country house and its guests in the hunting season. But the reviewer was more anxious to get to the people; and these turned out to be in the first instance, the three daughters of a duchess, who were at the same moment in their respective dressing-rooms,

and each imparting confidences to her maid. It was ingeniously arranged that these confidences should be reported in turn ; and there was a very comical similarity among them, seeing that they all referred to a youthful marquis of vast possessions who was to arrive at the house that evening, and to the probable effect on him of certain costumes and styles of dressing the hair.

Now Fitzgerald knew a great deal more about the habits of a "stand" of golden plover than about the ways and speech of duchesses' daughters ; but he soon began to form the impression, and much to his disappointment, that all this artificial talk, clever as it might be, was entirely impossible in the circumstances. Nay, he began to feel just a touch of resentment that three young Englishwomen of good birth and breeding should have been represented as exhibiting themselves, to their own domestics, as so many flippant and giggling barmaids. It is true that Fitzgerald's father kept a small country hotel (and even that he did unsuccessfully), but the Fitzgeralds of Inisheen were an old family, and had always been held of consequence in that part of Ireland : Master Willie had been accustomed all his life to be addressed as "yer honor" when out over bog and hill in search of game ; and was himself possessed of not a little faith in the virtues of lineage and good blood. And was it possible, he almost indignantly asked himself, that any three young Englishwomen of decent parentage and education—putting the duchess out of the question altogether—should have so little self-respect as to make confidantes of their maids in this fashion, and reveal their mean little schemes with the pertness of a soubrette in a fifth-rate faree ?

He passed on, however, in hope. The marquis arrives just in time to be sent off to dress for dinner. Then the people of the neighborhood who are coming to dine were introduced ; and here there was some very fair humorous sketching of a light kind, Fitzgerald marking down one or two passages for approval. He read on and on, until he arrived at the courtyard. He read on and on (not so hopeful now), while his landlady brought him a chop, some bread, and a glass of ale—his midday meal. He scarcely paid heed to these things, so busy was he with this book—so anxious to make something out of it—so disappointed at finding, with all the occasional smartness, the characters not flesh-and-blood creatures at all, but mere ghosts. The

dry bones would not live. By four o'clock he had finished the book; and he laid it down with a sigh.

Yet out of it he had to make an article somehow; more than that, he was determined to have it done that very night, so that the editor of the *Liberal Review* should see that he could do his work promptly. So he set to work forthwith; and labored and labored away to make something out of the dry husks. Fortunately the bellowing gentleman beneath was absent; and he could work on in silence. The hours passed; he had a cup of tea. Finally, after much correction and rewriting, he had a piece of work put together which, if it did not form a highly interesting article, was, he thought, as fair a judgment of the book as he could give.

Just then, it being nearly nine o'clock, the last post brought him a letter, which he eagerly seized, for though he had heard from Kitty that morning, might she not have taken it into her head—at the suggestion of her tender heart—to send him another little note by some strange means? But this turned out to be from his father.

“MY DEAR WILLIE,—That blackguard Maloney—the devil sweep him!—won't renew the bill I told you of, and he's going to put his low scoundrel of a brother on to have the law of me if I don't have the £40 ready by Tuesday next. I have tried to raise the money, but devil the penny can I get of it. Have you any money you could spare? 'Tis a mean trick of Maloney's: sure many's the time I've helped his old grandfather when he hadn't as much clothes on his back as would have lifted the kettle from the fire. Bad luck to him, 'tis all because my Marshal McMahon beat his old scarecrow of a galloper at Drimoleague.

“Your affectionate father,

“EDWARD FITZGERALD.”

Master Willie had arrived in London with £38 in his pocket; and that was the total of his worldly wealth. Had this letter come at any other moment, it is possible he might have thought it hard he should have to part with that sum, or rather the greater part of it, to pay his father's Coursing Club debts. But what did he care for a few sovereigns when a fine career had just been opened before him, with no other than Kitty as the final crown and blushing and beautiful reward? Here was his first contribution to the

Liberal Review ready to be deposited in the letter-box. Tomorrow he was to see Mr. Hilton Clarke about the sub-editorship of the new magazine. And this morning what was the message, written in that sprawling but most lovable hand!—"O Willie darling, make haste and get on, and come back to me! And if your fine friend introduces you to any of the beautiful London ladies, just tell them, that there's a poor girl in Ireland that is breaking her heart for your sake." No; it was not at such a moment he was going to consider the question of a few pounds.

So he wrote :—

"MY DEAR FATHER,—I have altogether now £38, of which I send you £30, for I must keep a small margin. Then you can bring * my gun to Lord Kinsale's new agent (I forget his name), who offered me £6 for it when he knew I was going away. The other £4 you will make up somehow; but don't sell old Bess; she and I may still live to have another turn at the snipe some day. I think I have a good prospect here; more particulars by and by.

"Your affectionate son,

"WILLIAM FITZGERALD."

That letter, of course, he could not send off just then: the money had to be made transferable first. But here was this other one for Mr. Gifford—which from time to time he regarded with a qualm of anxiety, not quite certain that, after all, he had done his best. However, he resolved that it was now too late for doubt; he took it up, sallied forth into the night, sought out the nearest pillar letter-box, and there deposited the fateful packet. That decisive step once taken, his heart felt somewhat lighter. The night was fine, and he went on aimlessly wandering along the gaslit pavements, thinking of many things, but mostly of Inisheen, and perhaps most of all of an inland glen not far from there, and of running water, and of a certain moonlight night. Was not this Kitty's soft, low, trembling voice he could hear again in the silence?—"My love I give to you; my life I pledge to you; my heart I take not back from you, while this water runs." And perhaps she also—far away there beyond the sea, up in the little room overlooking the wide sands—was recalling these words at this moment; and

* He meant "take." But Master Willie had not quite got rid of all his Irishisms, despite his study of the style of the *Liberal Review*.

perhaps also shivering a little as she thought of Don Fierna and his elves?

It was nearly twelve o'clock when he returned to the dim little courtyard; and he was very tired; and perhaps the loneliness of this great dark world of London was beginning to weigh on him; so that he was glad to think of his escape into the realms of sleep (where Kitty was sometimes found walking about, with her soft black eyes laughing, and her voice as glad as ever). But, as it turned out, his adventures for that night were not just yet over.

CHAPTER IV.

A NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

FITZGERALD was just about to pass through the archway leading into the courtyard, when he heard a sudden scuffling in front of him, and then a man's voice call out, "Help! help! police!" Instinctively he paused; for he had no mind to enter into other people's squabbles; and, besides, he could not well see what was going on. But his appearance on the scene had no doubt produced some effect; for before he had had time to think, a man had dashed past him. Fitzgerald was in truth bewildered; he had been dreaming of Inisheen, not thinking of midnight robberies in London. And now he was inclined to let well alone, and thank God he was rid of a knave, when another dark figure dashed by—quite close by, indeed—and at the same moment he felt a sharp blow on his face. This was too much. This brought him to his senses. He did not know exactly where he had been struck; but he knew that his face was tingling; he knew that he had a stout oak staff in his hand, with a formidable knob at the end of it; and the next thing he knew was that he was in full chase down the Fulham Road with the most unchristian-like determination to give as good as he had got, or even better.

The first man had disappeared, but this one was just ahead; and Fitzgerald was well aware that his only chance was to overtake the fellow before he could dodge into some byway or corner. Now the thief, or burglar, or whoever

he was, ran very well, but his muscles had not had that training over rock and heather that his pursuer's had, and the consequence was that in a very short space of time young Fitzgerald had so nearly overtaken his man (and was so fearful of letting him escape) that he aimed a blow at the back of the fellow's head with his stout oak staff. The next minute Master Willie had nearly fallen over the body of his prostrate foe; for down he had come after that sounding whack, prone on the pavement where he lay without a sign of life.

Then a third man came rushing up; and Fitzgerald faced about, feeling now rather angry, and inclined to have it out with the rogues of London generally. But he instantly perceived that this little bare-headed red-bearded man, who now came wildly along, was no other than an artist whom he had once or twice observed going into the studio below his bedroom.

"You've got him?" he called out, in great excitement; "you've got one o' them?"

"Yes, I've got him," answered Fitzgerald, "and now I've got him, I'd like to know what to do with him."

"The scoundrels!" said the other, breathlessly. "If ye hadna come up, they'd have taken every penny I had on me. Eh, man," he added, staring at his rescuer, "did he hit ye? Your face is a' bluidy."

Fitzgerald had indeed felt something warm and moist about his cheek and chin; and when he put his handkerchief up to his face, he could see by the dim gaslight that he must have been bleeding pretty freely.

"Yes, he did; and I think I hit him too—unless he's shamming. You go and get a policeman, and I'll wait here by this fellow. If he tries to bolt, I'll give him another taste of my *kipeen*."

The wild-haired artist left rapidly, and in a few seconds returned not only with one but two policemen, whom he had found talking together, and into whose ears he was now pouring the whole story of how it happened.

Just as they came up, the man on the pavement slowly raised himself on his knees, and began to rub the back of his head.

"Who done that?" he muttered, as if he were not quite awake.

Then he seemed to collect himself somewhat; he looked up and around; and perceiving the approaching policemen,

he uttered the one word "Copped," and resigned himself to his fate.

"Why, it's the Cobbler, as I'm alive!" said one of the policemen, getting hold of him by the shoulder, and turning the apathetic face round to the gaslight. "He's been wanted ever since that job in the Cromwell Road,"

"Now look here, my good fellow," said the Scotchman, "I'm going to pick up my hat. I'm no going to the station at this time o' night. Ye maun take my name and address, and I'll come in the morning, and prefer the charge—"

"That 'll do sir; there's more nor one job agin this man."

"Off to the station, then, wi' the scoundrel; and don't lose your grip of him. If you, sir," he said, turning to Fitzgerald, "will walk back as far as my studio, I will give you a basin of water to wash your face in—it's the only way I can thank ye."

"Oh, but we are neighbors," said Fitzgerald. "I know you well enough. You are the man who makes such a frightful row with your Scotch songs."

"Eh! how do you know that?" said the other, sharply.

"Because my room is just over your studio."

"Bless me!—then you are the man that goes tramping up and down all night—tramp, tramp—tramp, tramp—then five minutes' rest—then tramp, tramp—tramp, tramp—up and down. Man, I've always pictured ye as a sort of Eugene Aram, wringing your hands; I felt sure ye had murdered somebody. Or a hyena in a cage. What do ye gang on in that way for?"

"It's a bad habit, that's all."

"But what's your business?" said the other, bluntly.

"I write for newspapers."

"I did not think that was such hard work. It must cost ye a lot in shoe-leather," said the Scotchman, dryly. "However, when I've got my hat, ye maun come in and have a glass. I was just getting back to my supper, when they scoundrels grippet me. I wish I had a candle. I'm thinking the police, now we've handed over to them such a notorious creeminal, might give us another gas-lamp in this infernal dark yaird."

Without the aid of a candle, however, he soon picked up his hat; then he led the way into a hollow-sounding and apparently spacious room, lit the gas, and forthwith proceeded to get his companion some fresh water with which

to wash his face. And while Fitzgerald, who found that the bleeding had proceeded merely from the nose, and that he was not cut at all, was performing that operation, the Scotchman, with a smartness which showed that he was familiar with the exigencies of camping out, had lit a little gas stove, produced some tinned meat, and put a quite snow-white tablecloth on a small table, with some glasses, plates, knives, and forks.

"Now we'll have a bit of supper and a crack," said he, "since we're neighbors. Will I make ye a dish of hot soup? Five minutes will do it."

"Oh no, thank you," said young Fitzgerald, who was much taken with the frankness of this short, broad-shouldered, red-bearded, and wild-haired person. "That tinned beef will do capitally for me. But what I should like better than anything," he said, casting his eyes round the big, gaunt, and dusty studio, which had very little furniture beyond the heaps of canvases all ranged with their faces to the wall, "would be to have a look at your pictures."

"My pictures?" said the other. "Oh yes. As ye're a newspaper man, ye're no likely to be a buyer."

"You would rather not show them to a buyer, then?"

"There is nothing in the wide world I hate so much," said the other, busying himself with the table, "little experience as I have of it. I don't mind criticism—the sharper, the more likely I am to get something out of it. But the valuation in money—that's what gangs against the grain. Come, sit down, man; ye're none the worse for the stroke on the nose. The water is near boiling already: and ye'll have a glass of toddy. Here's the bottle, and there's the sugar."

"Thank you; but I don't drink whiskey."

"Hwhat!" shouted the red-bearded artist, nearly letting the bottle fall. "Hwhat d'ye say—"

"But I've got some beer overhead. I will fetch some in a minute."

"Gude preserve us laddie! but if it's ale ye want, there's a bottle or two in the corner. What's your name, by-the-way?"

"Fitzgerald."

"Mine's Ross. John Ross. Fall to, man; there's no use wasting time over meat when there's a pipe and a glass o' toddy to follow."

Fitzgerald soon found out that he was excessively

hungry, and as the cold beef and the bottled ale were alike excellent, he did ample justice to both, while with equanimity he submitted to be examined and cross-examined by this frankly downright acquaintance.

"You're one o' the lucky ones, I can see," said Ross, when Fitzgerald had told him how his literary prospects were. "Ye've fallen on your feet just at once. Here have I been in London near six years, and I have na sold as many pictures as I have sold in two seasons when I was pentin' in the Trossachs in a caravan. But bless ye, what does it matter?" he continued, with cheerful good-humor. "I have all the more pictures to sell when I do fall on my feet. I envy nobody, so long as I can get a crust of bread; for I reckon on my time coming."

"Of course if you were to get into the Academy, your pictures would have a great additional value, I suppose," Fitzgerald observed.

"The Academy?" said John Ross, with a stare. "Do ye mean me becoming a member of the Academy?"

"Of course. Isn't that the natural ambition of every artist?" said his new acquaintance.

"Oh, but that's luck beyond anything I'm thinking of," said the other, imperturbably, as he proceeded to pour out some scalding hot water on a couple of lumps of sugar. "Just think of all the men there are pentin'; and the chances of any one of them getting such a stroke of luck as that! No, no; all I hope for is that they who are in the Academy would be a bit friendly. If there's any one bears them a grudge it's no me—if the chance happened my way, wouldn't I take it? and how can I blame them? No, the bit of luck I hope for is to get a good place some day on the walls; and that is no easy, if you think of all the people who want to be hung. They did hang one o' mine last year, but it was away at the roof; so you see my line of luck is no clear before me yet, and yours is."

"But I have only the chance," said Fitzgerald. "Since I have come to London I haven't earned a penny, as far as I know."

"Hear till him! Man, ye've everything before ye. Ye've all the train nicely laid; ye've only to light the match, and *whaff* goes the pouter!"

By this time they had both lit their pipes; and John Ross went on to talk about his own art in a way that very soon astonished his companion. Whether he could paint

or not was still, so far as his companion was concerned, an open question, but at least he could talk, and that in a manner that was quite surprising. His vague, rambling discourse, warming up now and again into enthusiasm, was really eloquent, in a curious, bizarre, happy-go-lucky kind of fashion; full of figures, of quick, happy illustrations; scornful at times, as he hit right and left; and occasionally describing an object as if he had flashed a ray of sunshine on it. Fitzgerald was intensely interested, and could have gone on forever listening; but at the same time he could not help wondering what the actual work was like of a man who was at one moment denouncing the pre-Raphaelites for their worship of sadness, their archaic mannerisms, and their cast-iron hardness of form, and at the next denouncing the French landscape artists for their fuzziness of detail, their trickiness, their evasion of daylight.

"It is not what I can do myself," he said at last, observing that Fitzgerald's eyes had strayed once or twice to the canvases. "It is what I know I should try to do. Suppose ye want to paint a field of ripe corn; will ye get at it, do ye think, by sitting down and pentin' the stalks and the heads—ay, if ye were to spend a life-time at it, and paint fifty thousand of them? Ay, and if ye painted a hundred thousand of them as like as could be, ye'd be no nearer getting at your cornfield. For what ye have to paint is what ye see; and when ye look at a cornfield ye see nae single stalks at all, but a great mass of gold, as it were, with a touch of orange here, or paler yellow there, and a wash of green where the land is wet, and sometimes of warm red even, where the stalks are mixed with weeds and ye are no going to get that color either by chasing the daylight out of the sky, and taking the thing into a room, and making a clever bit of a fuzzy sketch in gray and green and black. That's easy—but it's no the cornfield. Ay, and there's more. Ye've got to paint more than ye see. Ye've got to put just that something into the cornfield that will make people's hearts warm to it when they see it on your canvas. Suppose that ye've been ill for a month or two; laid on your back, maybe, and sick tired of the pattern on the walls o' your room; and at last the day comes when the doctor thinks you might be lifted into a carriage and taken oot for a drive. And we'll say it's a fine warm afternoon, and your heart is just full of wonder and gladness, like, at the trees and the soft air; and we'll say that all of a sudden,

at the turning o' the road, ye come in sight of this field of ripe corn, just as yellow as yellow can be under the afternoon sky. Ay, and what is it when ye see such a wonderful and beautiful thing—what is it that brings the tears to your een? I say, what is it? For it's *that* ye've got to catch and put in your picture, or ye'll be a d——d mistake as a painter!"

Fitzgerald did not stay to ask him whether this was not demanding that the landscape painter should possess the nervous system of an invalid (though, perhaps, something might be said even for that theory, as applied to all forms of art); he was much too interested to interrupt. But by a singular chance Ross drifted away from painting altogether. He was talking of the instinct for good color that many people had who had no artistic training whatsoever, and by accident he referred to fish and artificial flies, and so forth. Fitzgerald looked up suddenly.

"Are you a fisherman, too?" he said, quickly.

"A wee bit. Are you?"

"I have thrown a fly," said Fitzgerald, modestly, and feeling in his pocket for a certain envelope.

"As I was saying, that's why I hold the salmon to be the king o' fish. He knows good color. It's no use trying him with your aniline dyes: yellow and scarlet and gold—that's what he watches for; whereas trout—ay, and even sea trout, are a mean, depraved, magenta minded race o' creatures. Man, I filled my basket last year in Perthshire wi' the most miserable puce things.

"But what was the color?"

"Puce. A dirty, drab-lilac kind of thing it was. But that was naething to the fly that was recommended me for sea trout in Argyleshire—ay, and it took, too. Just think of this: the body, arsenic green worsted, with a bit of white tinsel; the hackle, a purple-blue; and the wings—Heaven knows where they came from except it might have been from a hoodie crow—a heedjous gray, like the color of a decayed corpse. Do ye think a salmon would have looked at such a thing?"

"Perhaps," said Master Willie, as he slowly drew out an envelope from his pocket and put it on the table, "this would be more to his liking?"

"Eb, man!" said Ross, drawing out the great flies in all their royal splendor of crimson silk, and yellow tinsel, and golden-pheasant feathers. "Where got ye them?"

"I have been amusing myself making them for a friend—the man I told you about; I could not think of any other way of showing him I was sensible of his kindness."

"Ay, did ye make these yoursel? Now that I think of it, ye dinna look as if ye had spent a' your life in a newspaper office."

"I have spent most of it tramping over wild bogs and on hillsides," said Fitzgerald, with a laugh. "A good deal more than I should have done."

"Shooting?"

"Yes."

"What sort?"

"Oh, mostly wild fowl, teal, snipe, woodcock, and so on, chiefly in the winter."

"Hard work, then?"

But here the conversation went far afield; for there were descriptions of winter nights on the bog-land and, winter mornings on the hill, and wild adventures along the shore in snow-time or in the hard black frost. Even to Fitzgerald himself—who was pleased to see how interested his companion was in these reminiscences—it seemed that they were more picturesque now and here in London than when he had to get up shivering in the dark morning, and dress by candlelight, and sally forth through the silent streets of Inishecn. He forgot the wet clothes in describing the view from the mountain side outlooking to the sea. He forgot the mortification of misses in the glory of lucky finds. These days of sport that are lived over again in memory generally end with a heavy bag; and however tired and cold and wet and hungry the sportsman may have been in reality, he forgets all that, and remembers only the delight with which that heavy bag is thrown down in the hall, and the warm snug evening afterward, when the dinner things are removed, and chairs drawn to the fire, and the friendly tobacco begins to throw a charm over the soul.

Only once did Fitzgerald, who, it must be confessed, had enjoyed talking over these things, try to start his companion off again about painting. "Are you a sea-painter?" he said. "Do you paint sea-pieces as well?" and then he glanced again at the dusty gray canvases.

"I?" said Ross. "No, I should think not! Why, it would break my heart. Other things are difficult enough; but that! Man, I see pictures of the sea at the Academy

that just make one laugh. Every wave as accurately shaped and modelled as if it was cast out of melted cannon; every little turn of foam as clean cut as a meerschaum pipe. God! the fellows must be cleverer than Joshua the son of Nun, for they must have got the sea as well as the sun and clouds to stand still. Did ever man's eye see moving water like that?—moving water, that is a constant distraction of lights and shifting shadows and forms—lightning touches, ye might say, so swift were they—all bewildering and glancing round ye; and *that* is what ye begin to cut and carve and stick on canvas as if it were slices of cream-cheese on the top o' green sealing-wax. No, no; it's bad enough inland. Even when ye get perfectly still shadows on a perfectly still loch, there's an oily kind of glisten that no pent-box is likely to get for ye. Eh, and such chances as we had sometimes at the wild fowl when we were camping out—that would have made your mouth water; ay, and at black game too. Nearly every morning when we went out to wash in the burn—that was when we had the caravan in the Trossachs—I've seen them walking about without the least fear o' us. Maybe the old black-cock would give a cluck-cluck of warning, but the hen and her brood scarcely heeded. Deed, I once hit an old gray hen with a pent-brush, as sure as death. And when, at last, the keeper lent me a gun, and said I might shoot a bird once in a while—for our own cooking, ye ken, out I went as early as six o'clock." So again they were back on the various adventures and experiences of shooting; recalling vivid rambles in other years, now in Inverness-shire, now on the desolate bog-lands near to Inisheen. And so interesting was this talk that when Fitzgerald definitely rose to depart, at the hour of half-past four in the morning, he had almost forgotten he had not seen his host's pictures.

"Pictures," said John Ross, with a laugh, "toots no, man, ye can see pictures any day, and better than mine. But I would like ye to come in whenever ye have half an hour, and smoke a pipe, and let us know how ye are getting on."

"All right, I shall be delighted," said Fitzgerald, most heartily. "And I may learn something to-morrow—that is to say, if my nose has not become twice its natural size, in which case I shall keep indoors."

CHAPTER V.

THE BEGINNING OF A CAREER.

HOWEVER, there was no trace of the blow discoverable next day, and so on this fine May morning Fitzgerald set about the accomplishment of his various tasks. First of all, he had to accompany his artist friend to the police station, though indeed he harbored no sentiment of revenge against the luckless Cobbler who had once more fallen into the clutches of the law. Then he proceeded to get the thirty pounds made transferable to Ireland. This nevertheless, he did with some compunction. For, if he was to fight his way in London, was it fair to Kitty, who had intrusted her future to him, that he should thus throw away the sinews of war? Was it not running a tremendous risk to leave himself with only seven pounds before securing some definite work? But then, on the other hand, he had fair prospects before him; and he had the courage of two or three and twenty; besides, he was not going to allow that blackguard Maloney to triumph over his father, Coursing Club or no Coursing Club. And so he went and sent off the money, and then made his way to the Albany, where he had an appointment with Mr. Hilton Clarke. When Fiammetta showed him into the richly-colored room, he found that gentleman reclining in a low easy chair, in a voluminous dressing-gown; a cigarette in one hand, a paper-covered novel in the other, while before him on the little table were the remains of a French breakfast.

"How are you, Fitzgerald?" he said, throwing aside the book. "Sit down and have some coffee and a cigarette. No? You'll find that Chartreuse worth trying. Well, and what did you think of the great Gifford? Was the godlike man up to your expectations?"

"I was very much interested," said Fitzgerald, rather timidly; for indeed he did not like the way in which Mr. Hilton Clarke spoke of the literary calling and of its professors, whilst he did not wish to show the presumption of putting himself into antagonism with one who was so much

his superior. "I have always had a great regard for the *Liberal Review*, and—of course I never thought I should ever meet the editor. I haven't seen you to thank you for giving me such a chance. Perhaps you don't quite understand what it is to a young fellow who has only heard of well-known men. I—I thought it was a great honor.

"Oh, you will soon get rid of all that modesty," said the other. "It is a useless commodity in London."

"We walked home together," continued Fitzgerald, "as far as Sloane Street; and Mr. Gifford was good enough to say I might try my hand at a notice of that new novel *Daphne's Shadow* for the *Liberal Review*."

"The devil he did! What can have made him so good-natured?"

"I think I know," put in Fitzgerald, dexterously. "His good-nature was caused by your good-nature in recommending me."

"Oh, that was nothing," said the other, carelessly. "Well, you must be cautious how you set about it. Bring the book to me."

"But I have already sent in the review."

"Already? You haven't been wasting time, then."

"And I have been doing more than that," said Fitzgerald, pulling out a certain envelope. "I have been putting together a few salmon flies for you, if you care to have them. I found I could get the materials better in London."

"Ah, thanks—much obliged," said Hilton Clarke, taking out one or two of the flies with his beautiful white fingers. "But about this review. I am afraid the gray-eyed Athene wasn't looking after you when you sent it in in such a hurry. I wish you had come to me first. Young reviewers don't seem to understand that they ought to consider for whom they are writing when they write. It isn't the public; the public judge for themselves nowadays; dinner tables and clubs do all that. Nor the author; the author is pig-headed; besides, if you don't tell him he is better than Byron or Shakspeare, he will think you are devoured with jealousy and spite. No," continued Hilton Clarke, as he carefully rolled up another cigarette, "you are writing for your editor. He is the audience you ought to consider. He is the person you must impress with a conviction of your sagacity. Now, to do that, you see, you want experience; you want to know your man. I wish you

had come to me. I suppose it never occurred to you to put John Brown into the review you wrote for Gifford?"

"John Brown?" said Fitzgerald, looking bewildered. "What John Brown?"

"John Brown, of Harper's Ferry. No, you never thought of that. But if you had only come to me, I could have told you that you had only to put John Brown into the review—anywhere, anyhow—and you'd have fetched old Gifford to a dead certainty. He can't withstand John Brown. All you've got to do," he continued, contemplating one of the salmon flies and stroking out the soft feathers, "is to take John Brown's body, without any wings, or hackle, or tinsel, as one might say, and you drop that fly quietly over Gifford's nose, and he'll rise to it like a grilse just fresh run from the sea."

Fitzgerald could not understand why this friend of his lost no opportunity of throwing taunts—however they might be veiled in a sort of scornful fastidiousness—at Mr. Gifford; but for the constraint with which he listened to such speeches there were also other reasons. Among the various articles of young Fitzgerald's creed (he was only three-and-twenty) there were none he clung to more implicitly than these two: first, that the great majority of womankind were honest and honorable, self-denying, believable, and worthy of all the beautiful things that had been said about them by the poets; and secondly, that literature was one of the noblest callings on the face of the earth, and that he who did good work therein—whether it was definitely adding to the world's possessions in that way, or whether it was merely in teaching men, from week to week, what they ought to value—was a public benefactor who ought to be regarded with respect and affection and gratitude. Now on both these points Mr. Hilton Clarke discoursed with a complacently open scepticism; and at such times Fitzgerald wished he could close his ears against this talk, not that it in the slightest degree affected his beliefs, but that it affected what he wished to regard as the character of his friend. Fitzgerald was naturally a hero worshipper, and he was capable of a warm gratitude. He wished to think the best of his friend. And when Hilton Clarke talked in this fashion—which he seemed to enjoy in proportion as Fitzgerald's face fell—the latter did try to close his ears as much as he could. Then, again, when he left he would try to forget all that he had heard. He would

remember only Hilton Clarke's best points—the charm of his conversation when he happened to light on some literary point that interested him; his great kindness shown to a mere stranger met by chance in the south of Ireland; and his personal courtesy (the way in which he had come to the relief of his improperly attired guest was still fresh in Fitzgerald's mind). Besides, perhaps his experience of women had been unfortunate; and perhaps his disparagement of contemporary literature, especially of critical literature, was due to a sort of modesty, seeing that he himself held an enviable position in it

“Well, now, Fitzgerald, let's get on to this magazine business. Won't you smoke?”

“No, thank you, I never smoke till night; it takes up too much time.”

“Ah, the eager impetuosity of youth! When you get a dozen years older, you'll be glad of something to help you to pass the hours. Well, my friend the capitalist has got some impetuosity too. In one day he has managed to secure a business manager for us, and also a publishing office in the Strand. No doubt we should start as soon as possible; for in a short time every one will be in London for the season, and then it is that people begin to talk about their plans for the autumn. Scobell suggests the week after next; but that is clearly impossible. We must have material to begin with; people won't pay a shilling for a mere programme of our intentions. My private impression is that the capitalist imagines he will find himself a person of importance in society through his connection with this magazine; but it will be part of your business, Mr. Sub-Editor, to remember that it is I who am editor of the magazine, and not Dick Scobell.”

“Oh, of course. I know what rows with proprietors are,” said Fitzgerald.

“Proprietors are the most unreasonable of mortals. They don't understand their proper sphere of duty—which is to pay and look pleasant. If the venture succeeds, they get good interest for their money. If it doesn't, they don't mend matters by coming in at intervals, like a Greek chorus: ‘Oh! oh! oh! Woe! woe! woe!’ Now, as regards your own position, Fitzgerald,” he said, as he poured out a small glass of Chartreuse, showing as he did so a singular-looking ring on his finger, consisting of a little Indian god,

in gold, fastened on a broad silver hoop. "Have you considered the question of remuneration?"

"As regards myself?"

"Yes."

"Not in the least," said Fitzgerald, with something of a blush. "I don't expect very much at the outset. I think I am very lucky to get a start so early after coming to London. There is an artist neighbor of mine who thinks I have been very lucky indeed, and he considers everything a matter of luck, even getting elected a member of the Academy."

"He must have been looking at this year's exhibition," said Hilton Clarke, dryly. "Well, now, this capitalist friend gives me a lump sum, I may explain to you, and holds me responsible for all the literary matter, and for having the thing properly put together. What you will have to do won't interfere, I hope and think, with any more serious literary work. Very well, what do you think of four pounds a week? Speak frankly, you know, for I may squeeze the good Scobell a little further yet."

"Four pounds a week?" said Fitzgerald, with his face brightening up with surprise. "Then my artist friend was right. I had five-and-twenty shillings a week from the *Cork Chronicle*."

"It is enough, then?"

"Yes, indeed. It is far more than I expected."

"You should never say that. It is not wise. However, as I am dealing with another man's money, I am not going to reduce the offer; and I think myself it is a fair one. And so you had five-and-twenty shillings a week on the *Cork Chronicle*?" said Hilton Clarke, regarding the younger man. "Twenty-five-shillings a week; youth and health and high ambition; and somebody to write love verses about. I suppose you were not unhappy? Oh yes, I could detect that subtle inspiration here and there, in whatever guise the young lady turned up. But I have always had a suspicion that when youthful poets gave their sweethearts long and sounding names, the ladies themselves were rather short of stature. Is not that so? It is like calling a musical little verse in Horace a choriambic dimeter acatalectic. The Lady Irmingarde, for example. That is a fine name; but I would wager now that the Lady Irmingarde is not over five feet three."

"I don't see what that has to do with this new maga-

zine," said Master Willie, striving to be very calm, but with all the quick blood of the Fitzgeralds blazing in his face.

"Don't be angry, man," said the other, good-naturedly. "I hope it will have a good deal to do with the new magazine. You see, in every well-conducted household you will find two or three people either in love with somebody or other, or else willing to think of the days when they were; and you can't appeal to that sentiment unless you, the writer, have a fresh fount of inspiration to draw from. You don't suppose that the old writers, when they were describing Helen, formed her out of their own head? Of course not. Of course they turned to the pretty Chloe or the laughing Lalage of their acquaintance, to see what soft cheeks and pretty eyes could be likened to. Do you remember Symmon's translation of that passage in the *Agamemnon*?—well, it is rather a paraphrase than a translation; but listen to this as a piece of English:—

' When first she came to Ilion's towers,
Oh, what a glorious sight, I ween, was there !
The tranquil beauty of the gorgeous queen
Hung soft as breathless summer on her cheeks,
Where on the damask sweet the glowing zephyr slept ;
And like an idol beaming from its shrine,
So o'er the floating gold around her throne
Her peerless face did shine ;
And though sweet softness hung upon their lids,
Yet her young eyes still wounded where they looked. '

Is not that fine ?

' Yet her young eyes still wounded where they looked. '

And indeed Fitzgerald considered it was so fine, and so nearly suggestive of a pair of soft, black, innocent young eyes that he knew of far away, that he straightway forgot all his wrath, and proposed to his companion that, if he had time, they should walk down to the Strand, and have a look at the offices.

"I can't very well," said Hilton Clarke, yawning and stretching out his long legs, and stroking his yellow beard. "I have got to dress first. Then I am going on to Jermyn Street to the Turkish Baths. Then I've got one or two calls to make in the afternoon. But you might go down if you like, and introduce yourself to the manager. His name is Silas Earp. And don't forget we must have a

touch of sentiment in the magazine; it is wonderful the interest that grown people take in young people's love affairs. Look at the eagerness with which they read breach-of-promise cases—the more absurd the better, don't you see? for they are delighted to find other people making just such fools of themselves as they did at the same age."

Well, Fitzgerald got away, and was rather glad; for somehow he liked Hilton Clarke better, and was more grateful to him, when he was not listening to him. And now indeed the day was joyful to him—a fresh, clear May day, with the pavements of Piccadilly looking quite white; and all he could think of was that Kitty would not know soon enough of the good fortune that had befallen him. After all, why should he have been angry about the mention of the Lady Irmingarde. It was only good-humored banter. For, indeed, as Andy the Hopper had remarked "'twas Masther Willie had the duck's back," and annoyances ran clean off his shoulders, so long as you gave him plenty of fresh air and sunlight and a moderate share of pavement for his eager and rapid walking.

He went down to the Strand, and saw the offices, which were in a sad state of confusion and dust. Likewise he had a long conversation with Mr. Earp, and a briefer one with the great capitalist himself, who seemed surprised that Hilton Clarke had not shown up, though Fitzgerald ventured to point out that an editor could not be of much use about the place until they had provided him with at least a desk and a penny bottle of ink. Then with one hurried and passing glance at the office of the *Liberal Review*—where, perhaps, that first contribution of his was at this very moment under consideration—he set off home as fast as his legs could carry him, anxious to fill up the rest of the day with some work, and also in the secret hope of finding a letter from Kitty, missed by his early outgoing of that morning, awaiting him. Moreover, he was very hungry, after these many hours; and so, on reaching his spacious if somewhat-bare and low-roofed study, he besought his landlady to cook him a chop with all convenient speed. And indeed that was a right royal banquet that he enjoyed there, all by himself, in the silent big room, made cheerful by the sunlight streaming in at the open window; for if it consisted only of a chop, some bread, and a glass of ale, was there not a letter of Kitty's, over a dozen

pages long, to serve as a musical and laughing accompaniment? The sun shone warm on the faded rugs on the floor; there was the faintest stirring of the wind among the young plane-trees in the courtyard outside; in the silence it almost seemed as if he could hear Kitty talking to him. And then, again, he had to imagine another picture—that lofty little terrace that looked down on Cork and over to Shandon steeple; and a small room there; and Kitty bending over these precious leaves, and sometimes raising her head to look at the rain or to think of him far away,

“AUDLEY PLACE, *Tuesday.*

“MY BELOVED AND BONNY COULIN.*—What I have done to deserve it I don't know, but since ever I came back to this blessed town there has been nothing but rain, rain, and rain, and the Beautiful City, that you tried to make me believe was like Venice, is nothing but a mass of smoke away down in a hole, and St. Mary's steeple over there seems to shiver with cold when it strikes the half-hours; and the only human beings within sight are a lot of rooks in the meadows across the road, and you can tell by the noise they make they are in a frightful temper because of the wet. I do wonder now, more than ever, where, in such a climate, a certain person got all the sunniness that's in his face, and in his eyes, and more particularly his harr. Did he take all there was to get, and leave none? At all events, Master Coulin, it's a very good thing for you, and it's a very bad thing for me, that you and I did not live in the time when the cold-hearted Saxon made the young Irishmen crop their locks, for then I wouldn't have looked at you, and I'd have minded my own proper business. Dear me, the audacity of some people, and the folly of others! Just when a good contralto is worth a mint of money in Italian opera, jealousy steps in and says, No, you sha'n't; you sha'n't even be allowed to sing in England; no more Crystal Palace for you; nothing but concerts in such centres of civilization as Cork and Limerick and Belfast; and just to make sure of hiding away such a diamond—no, I suppose it should be an emerald in Ireland—I'll set Don Fierna and his wicked elves to bind you in invisible chains, and something awful will happen to you if you even whisper *La Scala* in your dreams. Well, whether it was her tremen-

* *Coulin* in Irish means “the youth with the flowing hair.” Miss Romayne was doubtless familiar with Moore's songs.

dous good-nature, or whether it was the sunlight that had got into the brown of Mr. Jealousy's hair, or whether she got such a fright with the ghosts that she promised anything without the slightest notion of keeping her word, I don't know; but the thing was done; and then all of a sudden—in return for her extraordinary good-nature and self-sacrifice, she finds herself a forlorn and forsaken damsel; left to pace up and down the sand of Inisheen, which, as Andy the Hopper remarks, is so firm and clean that, 'Sure, miss, ye might walk on it wid a satin shoe.'

"Oh, Willie, I'm sick tired of the rain, and I don't know what I'm writing to you. I was wet through last night coming home. What induced me to take these rooms I don't know. I shall never again take lodgings where one cannot drive home on a wet night. But Miss Patience says she likes large views; I suppose they conform with her great mind. I have been so good, Willie! I have been really so very good that I don't know what to do with myself, and I expect to find wings sprouting some morning when I get up. I haven't gone round by the barracks once, and the two or three times I have gone round, I have kept my eyes fixed on the gravel *the whole way*, just in case a young ossifer might come riding out (I can see the frown on your face quite clearly, and perhaps it isn't safe to put jokes in a letter, when one isn't by to be scolded for impertinence, flippancy, unladylike manners, and all the pleasant rest of it). So we'll get back to business, please, and the truth is, you know, Master Willie, although it has been reserved for an English singer to reveal to the Irish people the pathos of 'The Bells of Shandon,' all the same the English singer can't earn a living by singing that one song, unless, indeed, she were to sing it through the streets, like Nellie in the *Green Bushes*. No, nor even when she makes a skilful selection illustrating the wonderful virtues of the Irish people, and when she shifts her engagements as much as possible from north to south, and east to west; yes, and even when she makes excuses for pretty long holidays at Inisheen or elsewhere—even the Irish people, though liking to be told of their virtues, may get a little tired of her, and wish to see a little less of her. In that case, managers might begin to hint about reduction of terms; whereas, even at present, it's just about all she can do to keep things straight—waiting for the glorious time when Prince

Goldenhair is coming to claim her and carry her off, Very well, now this is the point: at the — Theatre in Dublin they're going to put in a panorama between the pieces, and they've made me an offer (now you needn't jump out of your chair like that; it isn't to go on the stage); I say they have made me a very fair and liberal offer if I will go and sing for them—only one song each evening, which is light work, and I shall have no expense of dresses or gloves, for I sing in the 'wings' unseen. Don't you see the panorama is really a series of pictures of Irish scenery, and when they come to the finest of them—of course it's Killarney in moonlight; that's because they don't know the glen near the Blackwater where Don Fierna lives, and where mischief is done to the hearts of poor distressed damsels—then the orchestra begins to play very softly and sweetly, and then you hear the voice of an angel (that's me) singing away somewhere—at Innisfallen or Killeenalougha. I don't think much of the song they have sent me; but I dare say it will sound very nice in that mysterious way, and the moonlight and the view of the lake will put a charm into my poor singing. Now, Willie, I know you don't want me to go to Dublin; but this isn't like going to Dublin in an ordinary kind of way, for my name won't appear in the bills at all, and nobody will know who is singing. It will really be a long holiday for me, and I shall come back to my concert series after a sufficiently long absence; and I promise you that as I shall have no audience visible, I will sing every evening just as if I were singing to you, and think of you all the time; and the management will not have reason to be sorry for *that*. Now what do you say? My father's half-pay just about keeps him, you know; but I have always tried to send him some little present about midsummer to induce him to go down to Ramsgate or Margate for a week. Then these long holidays, even with all the good old Patience's economy, have very nearly emptied my purse, and supposing that Prince Goldenhair were suddenly to appear and say, 'Look sharp, Miss Kitty; I've found the bag of diamonds I went for; come along!' wouldn't it be very awkward if I had to say, 'Oh, but, dear sir, I haven't got a farthing to buy my white satin dress with'? So be a good boy and don't make any objections, and every night I'll think of you as I'm singing the song—oh, dear me, as if I had anything else to do now but think of you; with a bit of a cry now and again.

“What is the use of my writing to you? I know what you are doing at this moment. You are not working at all; you are not thinking of me at all; you are walking in Hyde Park with Mr. Supercilious, and admiring the fine ladies, and I shouldn't wonder if he had got you to convict crop your hair, like his own, and wear gloves to get your hands white. Why should I waste my time on you when you're not thinking about me? Perhaps you won't open this letter at all; perhaps you will leave it lying unopened on the table; I shouldn't wonder a bit.

“I got Miss Patience to drive out on a car to the *glen*. But it was common daylight, and Don Fierna and his elves had gone away indoors, and there was nothing but grumbling from the dear old Patience at her having to scramble down the bank and scratch her hand with briars. She couldn't imagine why I wanted to pull her to pieces like that, nor could I get Andy the Hopper that same afternoon to say a word about fairies or Don Fierna. Indeed, all the neighborhood became quite commonplace. Inisheen is a mean-looking, miserable hole; I never saw such dirty streets; and the wretched tubs of vessels are lying not on sand at all, but on mud. I hated it—except one or two nights when the moon was up, and I looked out on the cliffs beyond the bar, and I said to myself, ‘Well, now, if my bonny boy were coming home from these cliffs carrying with him the wild pigeons he had been after all the day, perhaps I'd like the place a little better,’ and, then, you know, how could I help thinking of the night you rowed me home in the boat, and all Inisheen asleep, and you had wrapped me up so tight in the shawl? I waved my handkerchief to you from the window, but I daren't lift the window; so you couldn't see. I watched you go away back to the town—the boat the weest black speck on the the silver of the water. Dear me! that I should say anything against Inisheen, that is the dearest spot in the world to me, and hallowed by associations that memory will never give up. My dear, dear Inisheen! My beautiful Inisheen! And will it be moonlight on that same night seven years hence? Perhaps I shall not be so frightened then.

“But what I dread most of all, Willie, is next Sunday morning. I know it will be a beautiful morning, just to spite me. And I know how I shall wait about the window with all my things on long before the time, and looking

over to the clock of St. Anne's and wishing it would push ahead and make the single Shandon bell strike the half-hour. (Why did you quarrel with Miss Patience, Willie? It was so nice to listen for your ring at the bell.) And then half past ten strikes, and out I go; and I am certain it will be the loveliest morning, and the hawthorn just coming out, and all the fresh air sweet-scented. And no one at the corner—the place quite empty—no trace of the gamekeeperish young Apollo with the shy eyes and the sun-brown locks, who used to say, 'The top of the morning to ye, Miss Kitty!' and be so modest and grateful for her condescension. Then away she goes, *all alone*, past the barracks—but really, really and truly, honor bright, keeping her eyes on the ground *the whole way* until she has passed the walls—and then do you know of a lane about there, Master Willie? Do you know of a lane about there that you can go along, and twist and turn about, until you get out among hedge-rows, where grown-up children can pull wild flowers and say pretty things to each other? Did you ever go along such a lane?

"But you are not listening. You are out walking with Mr. Superciliousness, and if there's anybody in the wide world who hates you with her whole heart, it's your despised but forgiving
KITTY."

He looked at the beginning of the letter again.

"I'm glad it rained on Tuesday," he said to himself, and he thought that his conscience would perhaps absolve him if he put off his work for a little while to send Kitty just as long a letter as she had sent him—cheating the great distance between them, as it were, and imagining himself talking to her in the little room looking over the valley to Shandon tower.

CHAPTER VI.

A FIRST CHECK.

TIME passed, and Fitzgerald grew very anxious about not hearing anything, good, bad, or indifferent, concerning the review he had sent to Mr. Gifford. He ventured to mention the matter to Hilton Clarke.

"Get it back," he said, laughing, "and put John Brown into it."

However, if each morning brought its little pang of disappointment, there was no time for balancing hope and fear during the rest of the day; for now the new magazine was being pushed forward, and everybody had his hands full. Everybody, that is to say, except the editor-in-chief, who when Fitzgerald called on him and urged him to come down to the Strand to decide some matter or other, seemed much more inclined for a lounge along Piccadilly, if the morning was fine, accompanied by this attentive Telemachus, who willingly listened to his discursive monologue. By this time Fitzgerald had got to know something more about Hilton Clarke, and had observed, among other things, that he seemed quite incapable of denying himself any gratification that lay within his reach. No matter what it was—having his initials in silver on his ivory-backed hairbrushes, or the purchase of an illuminated missal displayed in a shop window—the whim of the moment had to be gratified, and he was careful to point out to Fitzgerald that he, Hilton Clarke, had already done a good deal for Mr. Scobell in presenting him with the idea of this new magazine, and also to assign as a reason for his carelessness or his idleness the necessity of the business people having all their arrangements completed first.

One morning Fitzgerald went up to the Albany, and found his chief, with the accustomed cigarette in his hand, reading the *Contes Remois*—or, more probably, and profitably, looking over the delightful little woodcuts. He put the book aside as Fitzgerald entered.

"Mr. Scobell has made a suggestion that I think very good," said the latter, after the usual greetings. "He thinks you should have for your opening article a paper written by a lawyer, some wellknown Q. C., for example, on the terms of leases and arrangements, and the points that should be carefully looked after. '*Points on which a solicitor should be consulted*,' he suggests. You know, lots of people enter into agreements about a shooting or a house that look all right and safe, but that may land them anywhere. Now just at the outset wouldn't that be rather appropriate?"

Hilton Clarke looked at him.

"The suggestion is Scobell's."

"Yes."

"Well, you see, I don't think it is a bad one; but at the outset it is most important for me, and for you, and for Dick Scobell to know precisely where we are. Now I am the editor of this new magazine, and Mr. Scobell is not."

"Yes," said Fitzgerald, wondering; "but surely you may take suggestions from anybody if they happen to be worth anything?"

"From anybody—except my proprietor, you understand. No, we will get our own idea for an opening article, Fitzgerald. Let's talk about something you are more familiar with. And I have some news for you. One of the most charming women in London, one of the wittiest and one of the best-looking, too, has expressed an interest in you."

"Oh, indeed," said Fitzgerald, professing to be very grateful, as in duty bound.

"I showed her your *Woodland Walk*, and she commissioned me to ask you whether the verses were your own——"

"Which verses?" said Fitzgerald, for indeed there were several little bits of rhyme cunningly interwoven with that gossip about birds and waterfalls.

"Why, those with the refrain, 'The little ringlets round her ears.' Ah, I can see they were your own. I thought so myself. And I was to ask whether the little ringlets were dark or golden—golden, she guessed."

Fitzgerald flushed, and said, with an indifferent air, "I suppose the lines can apply to any color—pink as well as another."

"You won't tell us, then? Well, it was a pretty notion to bring the refrain in at the end of each verse. The music of it catches you. If I were writing an opera, I should have one particular air running all through it; cropping up here and there, you know, so that people should get quite familiar with it, and be able to whistle it as they go home. You have no idea how consoling it is to some people to whistle an air from a new opera as they are coming out. That is a pretty refrain you have in your verses,

' You hear the secret words she hears,
You little ringlets round her ears ! '

Yes, I like it. The repetition is effective."

"I have been to the lithographer's," said Fitzgerald, shortly. "The cover looks very well; but I have told him

to try red on a white ground. That would be clearly seen on the book-stalls."

"Ah, yes, no doubt. Earp will see to that, I suppose. Now, Fitzgerald, I suppose you know very little about women as yet?"

"I suppose not," said the other.

"I know one thing that will surprise you when you find it out, as I dare say you will." He stretched out his legs, and regarded the tips of his fingers—a favorite attitude of his when he had got something he liked to talk about. But sometimes he regarded his companion. "I am quite convinced myself that there is a large number of women who know nothing about, who are incapable of knowing anything about, the romantic sentiment of love. They have never experienced it; they will never experience it; and when they read about it in books they don't believe in it; they think it is only the ridiculous exaggerations of a poet or a playwright. They no more believe what they read about the passion of love than a man with an unmusical ear believes what people say about Mozart, or than a man whose eye is uneducated believes what is written about Titian. But, mind you, these are the women it is safest to make a marriage contract with. They will honorably fulfil their part of it; make good wives and mothers; and be affectionate enough in a trustworthy, patient, unimaginative sort of way, without causing any anxiety or bother. Well, now, I believe there are other women who are just as much the other way—who have an absolute hunger and thirst for the sentiment of love, for its dram-drinking, as you might say—women of an unappeasable heart. If it is your bad luck to come across one of these at the moment when her affections are by some extraordinary chance disengaged, she will almost certainly make you fall in love with her; and then, mind you, so long as you are near her, and keep her amused and occupied with fallings out and reconciliations and so forth, I dare say she will remain quite faithful to you. Oh yes, I have no doubt of that. But if you go away, that is dangerous. Her eyes will begin to roam about, and her heart to put out trembling little feelers. Of course if you were to marry her offhand, that might settle it; and certainly if she had children she would probably keep all right, for she would transfer her excess of affection to them. But to be left alone—to have this warm, generous little heart of hers waiting to be kind to somebody, and

her young eyes wounding where they look—poor thing!—how can she help going and playing the mischief?”

“Perhaps your experience of women has been unfortunate,” said Fitzgerald, as respectfully as possible. It was quite clear to him that Hilton Clarke had, perhaps in conjunction with the clever lady he had referred to, been speculating about the person who had inspired the verses in the *Woodland Walk*—that is to say, Kitty; and Fitzgerald resented this harmless curiosity as a piece of intolerable impertinence. They wanted to know whether her hair was dark or golden; they had been wondering whether she was a placid, faithful, unsentimental good sort of stupid creature, or a dangerous flirt—either suggestion seeming to him monstrous; and generally, as it appeared to him, they had been betraying a quite gratuitous interest in his private affairs. But Hilton Clarke continued as if he were quite unaware of the resentment that these generalizations of his had provoked.

“No,” he said, quietly, “I think not. And I would call it observation rather than experience. I suppose, now, you have never noticed that a woman’s eyes are always wandering? You have never sat at a *table d’hote*, and watched, for the fun of the thing, have you?”

“No, I should probably be attending to my dinner.”

“Ah, that is it. That is just it. If you look at the married couples, the husbands are attending to their dinners. It is the women whose eyes are constantly on the alert. You may look at the man as long as you like, and he won’t know anything about it; but look at the woman only for a second, and her eyes will meet yours—of course instantly to turn away again. Indeed, I believe that women can tell when they are being regarded, even when their own eyes are bent upon the table. It is a kind of instinct.”

“You seem to do a good deal of staring when you go abroad,” remarked Fitzgerald.

“No; I think not. But I have tried the experiment a few times. Oh, by the way, my charming friend says I may take you to one of her smoking-parties.”

“Smoking-parties? Are there ladies there?”

“Yes, of course.”

“And they smoke?”

“If they are inclined to. Some do; some don’t. It is Liberty Hall.”

“And does the charming lady smoke?” said Fitzgerald.

timidly. He wanted to know something about her, as she had wanted to know something about Kitty.

"Well, occasionally. But she is quite as willing to sit in a corner with you, and talk to you; and very soon you will imagine you are listening to one of the laughing ladies out of Boccaccio. But it is dangerous."

"What is?"

"Her trying to keep those parties away from Sir John's ears. She'd much better own up. Some time or other he'll come back from Ireland unexpectedly, and there will be a row."

"Sir John is her husband, I suppose?"

"Yes. I've asked her to write an article on grass widows for our magazine, and I'll have to see it doesn't set Clapham in a blaze—Islington, rather. But we shan't have many subscribers in Islington."

"I think I must be off now," said Fitzgerald, rising. "You think, then, Mr. Scobel had better not speak about that article to a lawyer?"

"I think, with Mr. Scobel's permission, I will edit the magazine myself. And so I am not to take any message about the little ringlets about her ears?"

"Oh, certainly, I told you," said Fitzgerald, "that pink was a good color. Let them be pink, if you like."

"Wait a bit," said the other laughing. "You won't be so uncommunicative when a certain bright-eyed lady gets you into a corner and talks to you, and asks to be allowed to light her cigarette at yours. That is coming very near, isn't it? Good-by. Oh, about that review: if you are anxious, why don't you call and ask Gifford about it?"

"I would," said Fitzgerald, hesitatingly, "if I thought I shouldn't be driving him."

"Oh, bother him!" said Hilton Clarke, cheerfully. "If he does not want it, we can use it in the magazine."

That parting touch took away all Fitzgerald's resentment. The man was really good-natured. And even supposing he had been driving his questions or his surmises about Kitty a little too close, might it not have been through a really friendly interest? Then, again, it was something that so great and acknowledged an authority as Hilton Clarke had looked favorably on the little verses. Fitzgerald had placed no great store by them himself. He had, indeed, hidden them away in a rambling sort of gossip, imagining that no one but Kitty and himself would know that

he himself had written them. And as they had pleased the great critic, he would write to Kitty and tell her. Had she not a sort of joint ownership in them?

Fitzgerald had now to return to the Strand; and as he was walking along that thoroughfare, it suddenly occurred to him that he would take Hilton Clark's advice, and call at the *Liberal Review* office, and so put an end to his anxiety. The advice was well meant; but it was injudicious; and still more injudicious was Fitzgerald's choice of an opportunity. To go and worry an editor about a neglected manuscript is a mistake at any time; but to do so before luncheon is pure madness. When the morning scramble of correspondence is well over, when the frugal chop and pint of claret have moderated the *sæva indignatio* produced by the contrariety of things, and, when, perhaps, the mild Manila and the evening papers may be still further inducing the editorial mind to repose, then, indeed, there may be hope for the anxious inquirer; but not before. Fitzgerald had to wait some twenty minutes in the office, during which time there was a constant passing up and down stairs on the part of strangers, whom he regarded with considerable awe. Then a boy brought him a message that Mr Gifford could see him, and he followed the inky-fingered Mercury. In a minute or two he was standing very much like a culprit in front of a long writing table; and Mr. Gifford, who was on the other side, and who looked impatient and troubled and hurried, was plunging to and fro in a sea of manuscripts.

"Ah, here it is," he said at last. "Sit down. Glad you have called. I meant to write. Well, you see——" He looked over a page or two, and an expression of dissatisfaction was very plainly on his face. "Why, you seem to have found nothing in the book, one way or the other!"

If Fitzgerald had had his wits about him, he would perhaps have remarked that that was precisely what he had found in the book; but he was far too disturbed and aghast at the querulous fashion in which the editor spoke of the article upon which he had built so many hopes.

"No, I don't think this will do," continued Mr. Gifford, looking over the pages. "I am sorry to have given you the trouble; but really you have made nothing out of the book. Surely there must be something in it, good or bad; you have found it nothing but lukewarm, like the Church of the Lacedæmonians. There is no flavor in what you have written. Look there!"

Fitzgerald was too agitated to think of putting the Laodiceans in their proper historical place; he mechanically took from Mr. Gifford a printed slip which the latter pulled off a file. It turned out to be a proof of a bookseller's advertisement; and at the head of the column appeared the contents of the forth-coming number of a great Quarterly.

"Do you see?" continued Mr. Gifford. "That article about 'A New Novelist' has been called forth by this very book that you see nothing in; and I am told they regard its publication as marking a new departure in English literature."

"Then I say that that is most shameful," said Fitzgerald, driven to desperation. "There must have been bribery or personal influence. The book is as weak and feeble as it can be; it is a scandal to English journalism that bribery of some kind or another should have got such an article written."

"How can you tell?" said the other, peevishly. "In your opinion the book is bad. Other people may not think so. And even you don't seem to think the book bad enough to call forth any definite disparagement."

"It is merely frivolous."

"And you are even complimentary here and there. Well, then, perhaps you will excuse me if I point out some things that may be of service to you. You know you ought to be accurate in your quotations:—

*De par le Roi, defense a Dieu
D'operer miracle en ce lieu.*

D'operer instead of *de faire miracle*, and that in so familiar a quotation,——"

"But *d'operer* is right," says Fitzgerald, hastily interrupting.

Gifford stopped and regarded him.

"Oh, is it? What is your authority? I should have thought the old police distich was well enough known."

Fitzgerald was so anxious to justify himself that his memory failed him altogether at this critical point. Nothing but confusion met him when he tried to recall where he had met with that luckless couplet. And so Mr. Gifford, turning from him to the manuscript, proceeded:—

"Then you introduce extraneous matter for no sufficient reason. You say here, 'One might arrive at a sort of nega-

tive definition of poetry by saying that it was precisely that quality which is conspicuously absent from every page of Pope, and which is conspicuously present in almost every line of Coleridge.' Now what is the use of advancing an opinion like that?"

"One of the characters in the book——"

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Gifford, with an impatience that was scarcely civil; though it was most likely he had been worried about something or other that morning; "but a reviewer can not be expected to set all the opinions of all the characters in a book right. And when you proceed to remove Pope from the category of English poets, you want more than a single sentence if you would justify yourself. It is not enough for you to say that such and such a thing is: you must prove it to be so. You can't go and settle half a hundred disputed literary points in the course of a single book notice——"

"I am sorry it won't do," said Fitzgerald, lifting his hat. "I may as well take the manuscript with me, if you don't mind."

"I am sorry you have had the trouble; but one must learn reviewing as other things; and perhaps I made a mistake in thinking you had had enough practice. There are one or two other points I might show you."

"Oh no, thank you; no, thank you," said Fitzgerald, with great courtesy; "I wouldn't trouble you. I must not take up so much of your time. Good-morning. I am very much obliged to you."

And so he got himself out of the office with all his mind aflame. It was not so much disappointment as indignation that consumed him—indignation that such a book should be made so great a matter of, simply because it was written by a member of the government, by a man in political life. What was the objection, then, to this review but that he had not made it violent enough either with praise or blame? If he had made of it a balloon, now, and tied the worthless volumes to it and sent them up into the blue, or if he had made a nether millstone of it and hung it round Spencer Tollemache's neck and plunged him in mid-ocean, no doubt the black-browed editor would have been charmed. But because he had merely told the truth, the review was lukewarm, like the Lacedemonians! And *de faire miracle!*—he knew it was *d'operer miracle!* As for Pope, he declared to himself that the whole "Essay on Man," boiled down

and strained through a cotton rag, would not produce as much poetry as you could find in a single phrase of Herrick' or Suckling's. And then he devoted the whole art and function of criticism to the infernal gods: and then—in the middle of the Strand, among the hurrying strangers—he laughed lightly.

For it suddenly occurred to him that to betray such temper, or to feel so keenly his disappointment, was not bearing out the character that Andy and Hopper had given of him to Kitty. Was he going to allow this first bit of misfortune to cast him down? He began to regard the matter from a common-sense point of view. After all, his being debarred from further hope of contributing to the *Liberal Review* (and he had to admit that Mr. Gifford's manner seemed conclusive on that point) did not necessarily doom him to starvation. And why should he be angry with the great Quarterly, even if it had been unduly influenced? The public would speedily put the matter right by leaving the book, if it was worthless, unread. When he came to think of it, moreover, there might be some justification for Mr. Gifford's harsh censure, regarding the article from the editorial point of view. Doubtless he ought to have left Pope alone. He should not have altered a familiar quotation without being ready with his authority. In fact, by the time that he had reached Charing Cross he had convinced himself that the world was not so much amiss; and this gradual revival from his fit of disappointment did not at all stop there; but quite suddenly—and in a manner that seemed to fill all the dusky sunlight of the Strand with a sort of rose-color—it sprang to a wild resolve. What if he were to go away back to Ireland, and spend a day among the hawthorn lanes with Kitty?

He could not resist. The rebound from that extreme depression carried him away with it; and only the necessity of having to buy a Bradshaw and get some information out of that distressing volume succeeded in calming down this bewildering delight and anticipation that had seized hold of him. Yes, by taking the mail train to Bristol that night, which was a Friday, he could reach Cork on Saturday evening; and then the Sunday morning—and his meeting Kitty—and clasping her warm white little hand! The whole trip would cost little over two pounds: was it not his only chance before the long drudgery of the new magazine began? A hundred times over he pictured to himself Kitty's

face when she should suddenly see him there waiting for her, and each time the expression was different. And as for reviews, and quotations, and black-browed editors, and any fifteen dozen of *Daphne's Shadows*, he let all these things slip entirely away from him, to be lost in the jangle and roar of the mighty town he was leaving. He was not thinking of them at all. He was thinking of Sunday morning and of Kitty's tender look of wonder and welcome.

It was about a quarter past eight in the evening when he reached Cork, and they were just beginning to light the lamps. There was still a lurid sort of twilight in the stormy purple-blue sky, and the pavements were of a wan gray; but one after another the orange points of the lamps declared themselves, and here and there a warm glow shone out from the shop windows. The omnibus rattled through the town, past the black groups of idlers; now and again a woman darting out with an angry objurgation to snatch in a vagrant child. He had been looking forward to his passing through the familiar streets as a sort of dream. Now it seemed strangely real. That sense of being at home that he had never experienced in the vast wilderness of London had possession of him again; the accent of the people had a pleasant, almost pathetic, touch in it; he seemed to know them, so well, to have got back among old friends.

But he was not going to seek to see Miss Romayne that night, wildly as his heart beat when he thought of her being so near him—just over there in the darkness—little thinking of what was in store for her. No; he would wait for the morning; he would have nothing less than the fresh and clear May morning to show him the sudden, glad lovelight leap into Kitty's wondering eyes.

CHAPTER VII.

“WHEN ALL THE WORLD WAS YOUNG.”

MASTER WILLIE was up and abroad early the next morning—too early, indeed, for anything but a stroll through the wide, empty, silent thoroughfares of Cork. It was a lovely morning; the sunlight shining clear on the tall fronts

of the houses, and on the deserted streets; a light breeze from the south bringing with it suggestions of the sea; the silence only broken by the occasional soft tolling of a distant bell. Was it the silence of this Sunday morning that made the place seem so strange?—for surely he had not been long enough in London to have forgotten these familiar streets. Or was the keen interest and even affection with which he regarded so well-known a thoroughfare as the South Mall, for example, due to far other causes? Suppose that as he walked along he did not see this actual sunlight around him at all; suppose that instead he was imagining these pavements swimming wet on a dark and miserable week-day night; the cars rattling by and splashing mud; and two figures closely holding together, arm in arm, under one umbrella? And suppose now that he sees one of these two look suddenly up to her companion with a quick, earnest gaze—a look of revelation, confession, complete surrender of love—a look that pledged her life away? For even the South Mall, in its canopy of darkness and rain, may enclose the rose-red, shining jewel of a love-secret.

So he walked hither and thither to pass the time away, half dreaming of these recent days that already seemed to be growing distant, until he found himself in the broad and winding thoroughfare of St. Patrick's Street, where more passers-by were now becoming visible. Was this then, the part of the Beautiful City that he had tried to persuade Kitty was like Venice? He looked at the place with a new interest (comparing it with the Fulham road), and perhaps also, as he thought of Kitty, with a trifle of compunction. But at all events it was picturesque enough—these masses of tall, narrow variously built houses in all sorts of architecture; their slate fronts, their red brick fronts, their plaster fronts, their stone fronts, their bow windows, flat windows, and French windows all shining in the sun, and their uneven sky-line sharp against the blue; and if he did make that bold comparison to Kitty, no doubt he pointed out to her that they were standing on an island; that there was actually water running below the street; the street itself leading down there to the canal-like Lee, with its busy quays and boats and bridges. He looked at his watch—it was half past nine: would Kitty chance to have put on that pretty soft gray silk dress he was so fond of, with its touch of deep crimson here and there? Poor Kitty: she

did not know he was down here by St. Patrick's Bridge, looking at the boats.

He crossed the river and began to ascend leisurely enough the steep and rugged little thoroughfare leading to Audley Place. Every step had an interest for him; he recognized every feature of it—the red road, the white walls hot in the sun, the soft green of the foliage, here and there the golden tresses of a laburnum hanging over from a garden. And Kitty had to toil up this steep ascent on the dark nights going home—sometimes getting wet, too, for want of a covered car. That was because the Prince had not found his bag of diamonds yet. Never mind; the world had not come to an end merely because Mr. Gifford did not like the review of *Daphne's Shadow*; and Kitty might have even something better than a covered car, all in due time.

At length he reached the little terrace on the top of the hill that is known as Audley Place; and he passed along to the end, so that Kitty should not see him prematurely; and leaned his arms on the red stone wall that enclosed a meadow, in the long grass of which rooks were loudly cawing. How well he knew the spacious picture that now lay before him!—of Cork, and its surroundings, and the outlying country. The bulk of the city, it is true, lay down there in the hollow to the left; a dishevelled heap of purple slate roofs softened over by a pale blue smoke, with masses of dark green foliage farther up the valley, and a glimmer here and there of the Lee. But then from the deep of this ravine the hill opposite him sloped gradually upward, the slate roofs becoming less and less dense, until in mid-air rose erect and tall and square the dark red tower of St. Anne's which holds the Shandon bells; at the foot of it the little churchyard, with its gray stones, and the green and gold of grass and buttercups together. Then, still getting higher, the houses grow fewer; the sunlight catching here and there on a white gable among the gardens; the town loses itself in the country; there are lush meadows dotted with sheep; there are tall hedges powdered with hawthorn blossoms; there is a farmhouse half hidden among the elms. And then, finally, the long, softly undulating sky-line, brilliant in the sunny green of the spring-time, meets the tender aerial blue of the morning sky, and we reach the limits of what is visible from the red stone wall, or even from Kitty Romaine's window behind us.

Master Willie's heart was very full : for there was not a wild thoroughfare in that dusky city—no, nor a little by-path in the suburbs, nor a winding road leading through the fair green country beyond—that he and Kitty had not made themselves familiar with in their long perambulations. And Shandon tower over there—how could he forget the pretty speech she made when he had casually said it was odd of the buidlers to have made this one side of it next them red and the other three sides gray? “ I am going to be like Shandon steeple, Willie; and the rose-red side of my love will always be turned to you; and other people may think me gray if they like.” Perhaps it was a trifle incoherent; but Kitty was not a literary person; and at all events he knew what she meant.

The slow hands of Shandon clock were now invisibly drawing toward half past ten; and so he thought he would go round the corner and await her there, where their meeting could be observed by no one. He paced up and down by this tall gray cheerless stone wall; and he wished the villain rooks would not make such a cawing. But nevertheless the silence was sufficient to let him hear the swinging of a gate. Then he listened, his heart like to choke him. Then—he could not tell how it happened—the world became just filled with a wild delight; for here was the identical soft gray dress, and the pretty little figure, and Kitty herself, who was passing him without looking up. But what was this? Was she crying? Was she trying to hide her face from any stranger?

“ Kitty!—Kitty, what is the matter?”

She turned instantly—the wet eyes startled, her face grown suddenly pale; and then, after one second of wild bewilderment and joy, she threw herself sobbing and crying into his arms.

“ Oh, it is you after all, Willie! I thought you were coming to-day; I thought of it all the morning; and then to come out and find no one——”

“ But how could you think I was coming, my darling?” he cried.

“ Oh, I don't know, I don't know,” she said, almost wildly; “ something in a letter, I think. See, I put on the dress you liked, I made so sure—but, but—oh, you have come to me after all, Willie;” and with that she kissed him, and kissed both his hands, and kissed the sleeve of his coat half a dozen times, holding his arm tight the while. “ Oh, don't

go away again, Willie! Don't leave me again. I can not live without you—it is not living at all. You won't go away again, Willie will you? We will live on nothing rather."

The light that was shining in her eyes as she regarded him!

"And they haven't altered your looks a bit, Willie—not one bit. My bonny boy! Promise me you'll never, never, never go away again, Willie!"

"Well, you audacious creature!" he said, putting straight the pretty little gray hat with its crimson feather. "Whose fiery, ambition was it sent me away?"

"Oh, but I've found out my fault; and haven't I cried enough about it too? I don't want any more ambition; I want you Willie; and I'd work for you if I were to work my fingers off."

But at this moment a smart young corporal, having emerged from the gate of the barracks, came along the road whistling "Garryowen" and twirling his small cane. So Kitty had to dry her eyes and look presentable; and she slipped her hand into her lover's arm and they proceeded on their way—well known to both of them.

"That is a most praiseworthy sentiment, Kitty," he said, in answer to her proposal. "I suppose you would sing in the streets: and I could enjoy myself in an ale-house with a long pipe—isn't that how it generally ends? But now that I've begun, I'm going on; and some day or other Kitty won't have to get wet through in going home from a concert at night——"

"Oh, Willie, that is too cruel! Did I ever complain? What a stupid I was to mention it even——"

"Never mind. You see, I've got a very fair start, Kitty four pounds a week for a half-mechanical kind of work that will leave me many chances of getting ahead in other directions. And what have you to say now, Miss Romaine, about the person you suspected so much? I think you ought to be grateful to him. I don't know any one else who would have so gone out of his way to befriend a stranger."

"That's like you," said Miss Romaine, promptly. "You're too simple. My dearest, you think everybody's like yourself. Don't I see through your fine friend? Everything you have told me in your letters confirms it. I can see it. The fact is, he never thought about that magazine until he saw you at Inisheen; and then he thought he

could make some use of such an unusual combination or knowledge of all kinds of out-of-door sports along with literary genius——”

“Hillo, Kitty; we’re on the line of high phrases.”

“Oh,” she said, coolly, “if you don’t know what you are, I do. It was you who gave him the idea of the magazine—I will wager anything——”

“A kiss?”

“Yes—and pay you now if you like.”

By this time they had got to the end of Fairy Lane—which may be a Fairy Lane enough in certain circumstances, though as a matter of fact it has a gaunt stone wall on one side and a row of commonplace little cottages on the other—and were making their way round by the back of the barracks, by rugged little roads and crumbling walls and stunted hedges, to the open country.

“I say,” continued Miss Romaine, “that he got the idea of that magazine from you. Gratitude, indeed! Where else could he have found any one fit for such a place? Where else could he have got any one who knows all about hounds, and horses, and salmon, and things like that, and who has the education, and ability, and humor of a delightful writer to make it all—all—all just delightful?”

“But wait a minute, Kitty,” said he. “Are you so sure about all those nice things? I know I can shoot snipe——”

“And you once brought down a wild duck,” said Kitty, demurely. “Crippled her entirely—she couldn’t fly away a wee bit ever after.”

“But I want you to be just to Hilton Clarke—but for the post he has given me do you think I’d be here this morning?—and I want to assure you, Kitty, that everybody doesn’t regard my literary masterpieces as you do. I told you about the review I had written. Of course I should have been awfully glad to get an article into the *Liberal Review*—even if it had been only three times a year. I never dreamed of such a thing being possible——”

“Yes, but it is possible. You told me——”

“I called on Mr. Gifford on Friday. Oh, he wouldn’t have it at all.”

But Kitty was not the one to be daunted.

“The more fool he!” she said, with decision. Nay, she stamped her little foot, and said: “And if he were

here, I would tell him so! Why, these old fossils are all running in grooves——”

“But fossils don’t run in grooves, Kitty.”

“And they can’t recognize fresh talent,” she continued not heeding him in her wrath. “How could they be expected to recognize yours? You haven’t been brought up in libraries and inky dens all your life. You have been brought up face to face with the real things of the world—with the sea, and the sky, and the dark nights, and the winter, and all about Inisheen that you have told me. That’s living; that’s not talking about living, or earning your bread by writing about what other people have said about living. What would Mr. Gifford have done when the ship came ashore at Kenvane Head? Do you think he could have scrambled down the cliffs to help the fishermen——”

“But his business is to write, Kitty——”

“It is not; it is to write about other people’s writing,” she said, promptly. “Why, I’d like to have seen him write that description of that very thing—the struggles of the fishermen, and then the captain’s wife refusing to be saved because her child was drowned. Would there have been any need to cry if *he* had written it? Would they have got up a subscription if *he* had written it? No, I think not. And I should like to see him try to throw a salmon line thirty-eight yards! And do you think he could have climbed up the face of the Priest’s Rock with a gun in his hand?”

“But these things are not necessary to the editing of a paper, Kitty.” said he, laughing. “And it’s very kind of you to try and find excuses; but I am afraid the truth was that I wrote a bad review, and Mr. Gifford properly said no. Well, I was very down-hearted about it——”

“You!” she exclaimed, with a smile of scepticism. “No, you can’t make me believe that. The thing isn’t in existence that is likely to turn your hair gray.”

“Unless it’s you, yourself, Kitty;—what do you say to that? But I was—entirely down in my boots; for I’d rather see an article of mine printed in the *Liberal Review* than be made Lord-Lieutenant and live at the Castle. And then I walked along a bit; and then I thought that the hawthorn must be out about the woods and hedges here; and that you would be having your Sunday morning walk

all alone; and then I said to myself, 'I'm going to see Kitty, whatever happens!'

"And if it was Mr. Gifford that led you to say that, Willie, I'll forgive him; though I still think him a stupid person who doesn't know his own interests. Oh, I made so sure you would be at the gate this morning! You told me last week always to look out for the unexpected, or something like that; and what do I care to expect about or think about except you? I haven't had on this dress since you left; I thought I would keep it till you came back. Miss Patience said this morning, 'Catherine, why are you taking out that gray dress again?' and I said, 'Well, I can't have all my things saturated with camphor; I must take them out and air them sometimes.' And then when I came out and saw no one, I—I thought it was too bad. I don't know whether I was angry with you, or with myself, or London and the tall yellow man——"

"Now, now, Kitty, none of that! How can you be spiteful on such a morning? See, here is a bit of hawthorn; let me pin it on for you. I thought the hawthorn would be out. The hedges over there look as if there was snow on them."

By this time their arm-in-arm loiterings and meanderings had brought them within view of a spacious tract of country that lay fair in the warm and clear sunlight. The landscape, it is true, was somewhat marred by certain tall chimneys that rose in the valley below, with mountains of refuse hard by, and a coal-black railway line twisting through; but there was no need for them to look that way unless they liked. Here on these sunny uplands were still meadows all bestarred with daisies, and hedges white with the fresh-scented May, and over there were softly foliaged woods all in the tender green of the springtime. Then the fair mansion on that distant hill—looking so white among the trees: had its stately repose any attraction for youthful eyes and thoughts? Was there any dream of resting in some such place, away above the din of the world, after the fight and stress are over? Or rather, were not such ambitions quite unthought of? Was it not enough for them to have this still, beautiful morning, the sunlight on the warm meadows, the skies blue above them; to have life, love, and youth; a pressure of the hand, a glance of kindly eyes, perhaps a swiftly snatched kiss where the hedges were tall? For indeed the place was so still and

silent on this fair morning that they were suddenly startled by a peculiar silken whistling noise in the air, and looking up, they found that an equally startled rook had just flown over their heads, and was already half-way across the meadow behind.

She stooped and picked a germander speedwell from the bank, kissed it, and gave it to him.

"It is just the color of your eyes, Willie," she said. "They keep reminding me of you when I am out walking; and oh! it is so lonely walking now! I have to go over all the things you ever said to me; it is my only company. I say to myself 'Here we quarrelled'; and again, 'Here we made it up'; and 'There's the stile he helped me over, and caught me when I jumped down'; and 'Here's where the anemones used to grow, that he used to put in my hair.' Then on I go again; thinking of all the nice love-names you used to call me; and not a human being to say a civil word to one—nothing but the cows staring at you, and the flowers all occupied with their own business of drinking in the sunlight. And of course every one else you meet is sure to have a companion——"

"Never mind, Kitty," said he. "You'll have plenty of society in Dublin; you will have half the young officers from the barracks wanting to get introduced to you."

"Oh, indeed!" she said. "Indeed! I'd ask them if they had learned their drill yet; and if there wasn't one part of it called 'Right-about-face.' But it is very nice of you not to object to my going to Dublin, Willie. You see, it will be a six weeks' engagement, and for me a six weeks' holiday as well; and no silk dresses, or gloves, or music, or bouquets to buy. And they say the picture of Killarney is quite lovely; and just imagine how effective it will be—the lights in the theatre all down; then the moonlight begins to show on Muckross Abbey, perhaps, or perhaps it's Innisfallen, and all the water begins to be silver, and then the orchestra plays a very slow accompaniment; and then—I am going to begin very softly—you hear 'By Killarney's lakes and fells,' sung somewhere in the distance. You must imagine it to be a voice in the air; and won't I do my best with it when it is my boy's native country that it is all about! Ah me! there won't be anybody then to sing my praises in the *Cork Chronicle*. It will no longer be reserved for an English singer to reveal to the Irish people the pathos of anything at all. No; the only one she ever

cared to sing for will be far away, not thinking of her, but having fine dinners in his splendid rooms in London."

He burst out laughing.

"My splendid room in the Fulham Road, Kitty, is furnished with one table and two chairs, and is otherwise about as bare as a billiard ball. You don't get much splendor for six shillings a week."

"Ah," she said, shyly, "if you had only stayed in Ireland you might have had lodgings cheaper than that."

"Where?" he asked.

"You might," said she, very prettily, and with her eyes cast down—"you might have 'lived in my heart, and paid no rent.'"

However, not once during this long, delicious ramble along lanes, and by farmhouses, and through woods, did Miss Romaine recur to that first eager heart-cry of hers that he should give up his ambitious projects in London, and come back to Ireland. For although she could make love very prettily, in a shy, tender, and bewitching fashion, she was nevertheless a sensible young woman, and she perceived that whether she liked Mr. Hilton Clarke or not, he was affording her lover a very fair start in London literary life. No, she would not ask him to sacrifice those prospects merely to gratify sentiment; but seeing that he was here, and seeing that merely to touch the sleeve of his coat, to know that he was beside her, was the greatest delight in the world to her, her first thought was how he and she could be most together.

"When do you go back, Willie?"

"To-morrow morning."

"To-morrow morning!" she cried, and her face fell. "Must you?"

"My darling, I must, without a doubt."

"But this is dreadful, Willie. Am I only to see you for three hours—and—and the three hours nearly over—"

Her eyes began to fill, and her lips to tremble.

"What do you mean, Kitty? The whole day is before us—"

"There's dinner at two," she said, with her eyes turned aside from him, "and there's church in the afternoon; and then Miss Patience will expect me to stay in all the evening; and how can I see you? Three hours—and it may be years again."

"Oh, but that won't do at all, Kitty," said he, cheer-

fully. "I haven't come all this way to spend a day with you, and have half of it cut off. Not a bit. I am going to call on Miss Patience. I am going to apologize for any and every offence that she can think of—for I'm sure I don't know what I've done. She may draw up a list as long as my arm—or as long as her face, which is longer—and I'll write at the foot of it: '*Peccavi peccatam grande, et mihi conscius multorum delictorum, sed gratia Patientia*'—that's through the favor of Miss Patience, Kitty—I've been acquitted."

Kitty's face rose again.

"And I think it could be managed, Willie, if you wouldn't mind being a little considerate. I have found out what made most of the mischief. You printed a letter of hers in the *Cork Chronicle*."

"I know I did; I thought she would be pleased."

"But she sent it anonymously."

"I only appended her initials. I recognized the handwriting, and it was a sensible enough letter. I thought she would be pleased."

"But you don't understand, Willie; I must tell you about poor old Patience, though it is absurd. You see, she takes a great interest in public affairs, and thinks she is in a good position for being an impartial adviser—not influenced by interested motives, you understand, Willie—and so she writes letters to the newspaper editors throughout the country, and to the cabinet ministers, and advises them. She writes and approves of what they've said, or she suggests things they should do, and of course sometimes they do do that, and then poor old Patience is very delightful to live with, for she'll let you do anything on these days. But then she believes that if her name was known, all her influence in public affairs would fade away, for the public would think he was wanting something from them, and so she writes anonymously. Then you must needs go and discover her secret, and put her initials to the letter."

"There was no harm in the letter, Kitty. It only said that on some particular question—I forget what—we were the only paper in the country that spoke the truth, and every editor likes to print letters like that."

"Then the very next day, I believe, you must needs go and say something about editors being plagued with correspondence, and that she took to herself—"

"I wasn't even thinking of her, Kitty; though anything more diabolical than a woman who spends her life in torturing editors and cabinet ministers with continual writing to them—"

"Whish—sh—sh! Many a pleasant evening you owe to Miss Patience, young man. So now I'm going in to dinner. No, you mustn't think of it; I will manage it; men always bungle these things; and if you go and get your dinner, and be back about here at three, I will send you a message somehow as to how the weather looks. Oh, where are you staying, Willie?"

"At the Imperial."

"Sure, can't ye say the Impayrial?" remonstrated Miss Romaine. "Very well then, I will try to send a line to you there."

"Is it much use?" he asked. "I am coming to spend the afternoon with you, Kitty, whatever kind of weather there is."

"Go away now, you headstrong boy! You may have command over Don Fierna and his pixies in that dreadful glen, but you don't know how to manage a woman's temper. Good-by, Willie—oh, dear me how I shall hate the sermon!"

"Good-by, Kitty. Tell Miss Patience that I know quite well whose advice it was that induced the American government to give up Mason and Slidell."

He went down to the Imperial, and got something to eat. He was not much distressed about what was going to happen; he would see Kitty that afternoon, and that evening too, despite all the female diplomatists in Ireland or out of it. But in about half an hour any little anxiety was dispelled by the following note, hastily scribbled in pencil, which was brought him by a shock-headed boy.

"MY DEAREST,—I have mollyfied [*sic*] Miss Patience. She has said you might come to supper at eight. If you are about the front of St. Anne's when afternoon church comes out, I will go for a little walk with you; but let me leave Miss Patience first; she would not like an explanation in the street. Shall you be in the church? I will look out for you. Do, do be civil to her to-night.

"Your very much obliged,

"CATHERINE THE INCOMPREHENSIBLE."

So they had another long and delightful walk in the sunny afternoon, though this time they remained nearer the city, visiting various spots that were hallowed by their own wonderful experiences, and on one occasion standing mute to hear the distant chiming of Shandon bells. Kitty was most interested in listening to the smallest details about his life in London; but nothing that he could urge could overcome her dislike—or jealousy, or whatever it was—of Hilton Clarke. This was the more unreasonable that she had never spoken a word to him, and had only seen him once or twice in front of the inn at Inisheen. Even about his appearance, which to ordinary eyes seemed handsome and distinguished, nothing would please her. He looked finical. He looked supercilious. He stared impertinently. Wasn't his high-priest his tailor? And so forth.

"But you shouldn't say that," Master Willie remonstrated. "He never said anything against you. No; he was quite complimentary. He called you an epichoriambic trimeter acatalectic."

"I'll take that with a little water, please; it's rather strong," she said, saucily.

"I wish you'd give over your concert-room slang," said he.

"Oh, slang!" she said, "Slang! and what was that you said, then? Wasn't that slang, or worse?"

"It's the description of a verse in Horace—a verse that is just as musical and graceful as you yourself, Kitty, when you like to behave yourself, which isn't often. And if you had any gratitude in your miserable little soul—"

"Oh, thank you," she said, snatching her hand away from his arm. "Mr. Impertinence, that's the way to your hotel. I'm going home."

But Kitty's wrath was usually evanescent; you had but to take her hand and she surrendered; and so it was that they were very soon climbing the steep little hill together, with much cheerfulness, in the gathering dusk, the while Kitty was lecturing her companion on the wisdom of consideration, and the advantages of politeness, and also hinting that, if he could but introduce the names of one or two distinguished political persons into his talk that evening, no harm would be done. And as it turned out, Miss Patience, who was a thin, tall lady, with a somewhat dark face and severe gray eyes that made her look like a hawk, proved

exceedingly placable. She avoided all reference to the quarrel. She hoped he was succeeding in London. Then she lit two candles and put them on the table of the little parlor, and drew down the window-blind, and rang the bell for supper.

Master Willie returned her kind treatment of him with liberal interest. For when the little maidservant had come in to lay the cloth, and when she had placed thereon the cold beef, and salad, and cheese, and bottled stout, and when Miss Romaine had, in honor of her guest, lit two more candles and put them on the chimneypiece, then they all sat down to the modest banquet, and Fitzgerald proceeded to inform Miss Patience as to what was being thought in London concerning some topics of Imperial interest. And he listened with profound attention to her views on these wide subjects; although, it is true, she spoke with much caution, and even mystery, as though she were afraid of revealing secrets. She was anxious, above all, to know whether the public approved the line the *Times* was taking with regard to the government; and also what sort of person the editor of the *Times* was. Master Willie replied that he had met one or two highly distinguished literary people in London, but not the editor of the *Times*, who was no doubt, on account of his position and duties, one not easily approachable.

“There again Sir Rowland Hill comes in!” exclaimed Miss Patience, triumphantly.

Fitzgerald looked puzzled.

“Think of how we are indebted to him,” she continued, forgetting for the moment her mysterious manner, “for the diffusion of information, and for breaking down conventional barriers! Nowadays nobody has to bribe lacqueys to get to the great man’s chamber. The penny-post has done away with that. *That* is the messenger who can not be denied. The humblest in the land can reach even to the throne.”

Gracious heavens, thought Master Willie, has the woman been writing to the Queen? But all the same he agreed with her; the penny-post was a noble institution; and if she referred to the editor of the *Times*, no doubt he was approachable that way. But Miss Patience, fixing her severe eyes on him, instantly disclaimed any such allusion. No; she declared she was merely thinking of the system, and of its wonderful advantages of communication between

humble people and the great. Then she grew mysterious again; and began to put dark questions to him about the probable effect of a certain royal marriage then being talked of, and whether it was not high time that the voice of the people should be heard.

But the evening was not entirely given up to politics; for Miss Patience, with the kindest consideration, and under the protest of going to search for some papers in her room, disappeared, and remained absent; and Kitty went to the little cottage piano; and her companion was not a great way off. Miss Romayne, if not a highly finished musician, was at least a sympathetic player; and well she knew the airs which would awaken the tenderest associations in her lover's heart. They were those that he had listened to when he and she were idling away the glad hours along country lanes, or as they came home through Inisheen in the evening, thinking of all the things that life had in store for them together.

"And so the Irish people," she said, letting her fingers touch the keys very gently, "were not aware of the pathos of 'The Bells of Shandon' until I revealed it to them?"

"I wasn't," said he, "and as I was the sub-editor of the *Cork Chronicle*, hadn't I the right to speak in the name of the Irish people?"

"I wonder who first began to make words for these old tunes? I suppose the tunes were in existence ages ago. Oh, that wasn't much of a discovery, Master Willie; because everybody sees how the air can be made pathetic if you take pains with it; but what I am certain of is that another bell song, 'The Bells of Aberdovey,' was originally not a sentimental thing at all, but a splendid battle march of the old Britons. If this wasn't Sunday evening, and if I wasn't afraid of frightening the neighbors, I could let you hear something with the 'The Bells of Aberdovey.' Now there is a task for you: write a war song for that splendid march—a war song with a tramp in it and thunder!"

"Play 'Farewell, but whenever you welcome the hour,' Kitty," said he, gently. "You remember you sung it in the boat coming back to Inisheen?"

"Do I remember? Am I ever likely to forget that fearful night," said she, "when I signed my soul away to witches in the moonlight?"

But she played the air, nevertheless, very exquisitely and softly. And she played many more, wandering from

one to the other, while he listened in silence and dreamed over again the mornings, and the clear days, and the silent twilights they had spent so happily together. And well she knew—for she also had a tender memory—that however familiar these airs might be to others, there was no commonplaceness about them for him. She played one and then another, but it seemed as if they were all speaking of the sea, and of Inisheen, and of glad days gone by. These two were together so close now, the world shut out and forgotten. Why should there be any cruel gray dawn, and a wide gray sea, and then a disappearance into the frightful loneliness of London?

But the parting had to come, nevertheless, out there by the little gate, under the stars. Kitty was crying a little bit. What was the use of his coming over for one day, only to have all the old sorrow to go through again? And then he chid her gently. Had it not been a long, happy, idyllic day—something to look back upon, perhaps, for years? Was it not enough that even now, under the clear shining stars, he could hold her warm little hands for yet one other minute, and listen to the smooth and tender voice that he knew? Perhaps Kitty would rather not have him come back, then?

“Oh yes, oh yes,” the faltering voice said, and she drew him closer to her. “Never mind about the excuse, Willie. To-morrow—Wednesday—next week—any day, any hour, come back to me! That’s all I want! And it isn’t so much; and other people seem to have everything they want; and they are not nearly as grateful as I should be. Ah, must you really go?”

But the last word took a long while in saying; and even after she had given him the last kiss, and the last blessing, and when she had watched him disappear away into the darkness of the night, she still stood by the little gate there, trying in vain to dry her eyes before going into the house again, and wondering why fate should be so cruel to some, while others were so happy.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN LONDON AGAIN.

At length the fateful day arrived for the issuing to the British public of the first number of the new magazine, and Fitzgerald was glad to be able to draw a long breath of relief. During these past two or three weeks his labors had been indeed hard. He had been constituted a sort of intermediary between the managerial and the editorial departments, everybody wanting to hold him responsible for everything.

"Mr. Fitzgerald," the distressed manager would say, bringing him the proof of an article written by the editor, "do look here, if you please. 'The vile decoctions being continually invented and supplied to the public in the shape of effervescing drinks.'"

"Well?" said Fitzgerald, on that particular occasion. "Why not? Where's the harm?"

"We've fifteen different firms," cried the manager, almost in despair, "advertising their effervescing drinks and mineral waters."

"They must imagine sporting people to be a thirsty race," said Fitzgerald, laughing. "Very well, I'll get Mr. Clarke to take the phrase out, if it's likely to hurt anybody."

Then again Mr. Scobell would call in some morning, perhaps with a proof of the same article in his hand.

"Look here, Fitzgerald—look here, my dear f'lah. This won't do at all. You'll shock the public: I tell you you'll shock the public. Look at this: 'That numerous and important section of the British wealthier classes who have long ago given up the fear of God, but who are kept in pretty fair social order by the fear of gout.' It won't do, Fitzgerald; I tell you it won't do. You must ask Clarke to cut that out. I told him I wouldn't have any d——d atheistical Radical stuff in a paper I was responsible for. I'm not going into society as the proprietor of a d——d Radical and atheistical journal."

But this was a far more serious matter; for if Hilton Clarke were to know that Mr. Scobell had been furnished with proofs of the articles, or had expressed any opinion

about them, there would be the very mischief to pay. So Master Willie had to assure the capitalist that the most perverse ingenuity could not discover a trace of atheism or Radicalism in any one of the contributions that had been written for the *Household Magazine*; that Hilton Clarke would be perfectly astonished to hear of any such charge being brought against him; but at the same time, if there was a chance of any stupid person being offended by this chance remark of Hilton Clarke's, no doubt he, Clarke, would at once remove it.

Then he would go up to the Albany, and make some casual suggestions in as pleasant a way as he could.

"Well, you see, Fitzgerald," Hilton Clarke, said, promptly, in answer to these timid proposals, "I'm not going to edit the magazine in the interests of the advertising department. "They'll want us to puff pianos next, and write reviews of window curtains. And what idiot could be offended by a little joke like that? We can't write down to the microcephalous. Where are you going now?"

"I am going to have some luncheon, I think."

"Ah," said the chief, regarding him, "I suppose you can afford to do that now. But it is not wise. Nothing so certainly destroys the figure in time. I don't know how many years it is now since I gave it up: nothing between eleven and eight is my rule. Oh, by the way, can you help me? Have you sufficient ingenuity to suggest the kind of present one might buy for a lady—well, how am I to explain it? Something that will not be merely for vulgar use—such as she would have to buy in any case; and yet, on the other hand, something pretty that would not attract too much attention as a gift.

"I don't quite understand," said Fitzgerald.

"It is difficult to define," said the other, absently. "I have been puzzling over it myself. I daren't give her a piece of jewelry, for that would provoke question. And of course I wouldn't give her a piece of furniture, or costume, or anything she would buy in the ordinary course with her husband's money. That's the difficulty, and I can't hit on the *juste milieu*. It must be ornamental enough for a gift, and yet something she might have bought for herself——"

"What about a cigar case?" said Master Willie, at a venture.

The other laughed.

“Very well hit. You’re not far from the mark. But I think a cigar case would not precisely have the effect of staving off awkward questions. Well, if you are going to lunch, ta-ta. Be prudent, and you’ll be thankful at forty that you’ve still got a waist.”

Now Hilton Clarke had a vein of light facetiousness in his nature, and but little satire; moreover, he was good-natured in a selfish and indolent sort of way. But he never nearer reached a sharp satirical stroke than when he advised this poor lad, who was on the verge of starvation, not to destroy his figure by over eating and drinking. The fact was that, despite the most rigid economies, Fitzgerald’s worldly wealth was reduced to a sum of a few shillings, and that was slowly diminishing. The Irish trip had cost nearer three than two pounds. His father had written asking for two pounds more to make up the money to meet the bill, and he had got it. Then on the remainder Fitzgerald had continued to exist, if not to live, during these past three weeks and more. He gave up his only luxury—that single glass of ale with his dinner. The amount of walking he did was incredible; for he had much hurrying to and fro, and he would not take an omnibus. The luncheon that Hilton Clarke had warned him against generally consisted of a biscuit, with sometimes an apple. And he had given up going in to see his artist friend John Ross, because he could not ask him in return to a banquet of tinned meat, bread, and beer.

His salary having begun four weeks before, the *Household Magazine* now owed him a sum of £16; and if that money had been in the hands of Mr. Silas Earp, or owing to him by the proprietor, Mr. Scobell, he would not have had the slightest hesitation in making application for it. But somehow or other—he could not himself strictly analyze the feeling—it was impossible for him to go and ask for the money from Hilton Clarke, in whose hands he understood it was. He was certain that if Clarke knew he was in want of it, he would have it at once. No doubt it was owing to mere carelessness that he had not had it already. And to go and confess his need of it: would not that be almost like bringing a charge of want of consideration against one who had greatly befriended him? There may have been a little pride mixed up in this feeling, an indisposition to confess that, having scarcely a penny left in the

world, he could not write home to his own people for supplies. But the chief notion he had was undoubtedly that such an appeal would cause Hilton Clarke to be vexed about his own thoughtlessness: and Fitzgerald was a trifle sensitive himself, and did not like the thought of giving that pain to any one else. And so he contentedly trudged all over London (the printing-offices were in the City Road) instead of taking omnibuses, and he lived on next to nothing, and gave up—but this was hard—his nightly chat with Ross, rather than make an application that would cause Hilton Clarke to accuse himself of inconsiderateness. This conduct may have been Quixotic; the only sure thing about it was that it could not go on forever. That small stock of jealously guarded shillings grew fatally smaller and smaller.

On the afternoon of the day on which the *Household Magazine* was finally issued, Hilton Clarke, Fitzgerald, Silas Earp, and Mr. Scobell left London by one of the afternoon boats for Greenwich, to dine there at the invitation of the last named. It was not merely the prospect of having for once a substantial dinner that put Master Willie in good spirits. They were all in good spirits. So far as could be judged, the new venture promised to be successful. The quantity of advertisements that had been secured was remarkable. The "trade" had subscribed liberally for the first number; in fact, the last thing that had to be done before they went down to Charing Cross was to send word to the City Road to print a further five hundred copies. The poster, scarlet letters on a white ground, was effective; it was conspicuous on the hoardings they passed, and, needless to say, they looked out for it. Mr. Scobell talked as if the whole scheme had been his own, and pooh-poohed his manager's cautious reminders to the effect that the advertisers were always willing to patronize a first number, and that the sale could not be even approximately gauged until they began to get back the "returns." The capitalist would not hear of any such qualifications. He was assured of success. The richer section of the public could not fail to see what an invaluable manual this would make. Even with a moderate sale, the margin of profit at a shilling would be large. And so he paid for all their tickets to Greenwich.

Fitzgerald had not been down the Thames before, and to him it was a wonderful and a beautiful sight, the sun-

mer afternoon shining warm on the masses of shipping, on the gray tower, on the surging stream. And then when they reached Greenwich and the hotel there, and when he went out on to the balcony of the little private room, there was something that was more than beautiful in the sunset streaming along the wide reach of the river. There was a touch of the pathetic in it. That very wideness suggested the nearness of the sea. And was not the sea the great bond of association with those who were far away? He thought of Inisheen, and that seemed sad; for now there would be no *Fairy Frigate*—that was the fanciful name that Kitty had given to the boat he and she used to go out to row in—there would be no *Fairy Frigate* gliding over the golden waters, with the blades of the oars shining in the sunlight as they dipped and rose again. Can not you take her a message, then, you wide rushing waters, and you, great ships, floating down with the dying day? Alas! the distance is too great; she is so far away she can not hear; and there is one whose heart is so full of the thought of her, and so burdened with the sadness of being remote from her, that he has not much of a mind for the festivities to which he is summoned within. A hand is laid on his shoulder.

“Twenty pounds that I can tell you what you are thinking of!” says Hilton Clarke.

Master Willie starts up from his reverie.

“She looks like a Norwegian,” he says, “the bark there with the green hull.”

And yet, after all, when they had sat down to the very elaborate feast prepared within, and when their host was descanting on the merits of one or two of the wines he had ordered, the humor of the situation, so far as he, that is, Fitzgerald, was concerned, could not escape him. It seemed to him that all the dinners he had not had for the past month were now being offered him, when he could make no use of them. It looked ridiculous that one who had been living on next to nothing should find himself able—nay, constrained—to send away dish after dish only tasted, when tasted at all.

“To-morrow,” he said to himself, “when I shall be feeling myself very hollow about two o’clock, I shall be saying, ‘What a fool I was, then, not to have had some more of that turbot!’ This wine, now. Twelve shillings a bottle, I suppose. Six glasses to the bottle, probably: two shil-

lings a glass. I drink it; and I have drank what would have kept me in beer for a week. There is something wrong about the constitution of the human organism. When you can get plenty to eat and drink, you ought to be able to lay in a store against future need. What is the use of all this to me, if I am to be hungry again to-morrow?"

"Well, now, gentlemen," said he of the red face and bristly yellow-white whiskers, as he held up a glass of wine between him and the light, and then put it on the table again, "I did not ask you to come to Greenwich to talk business; but I think we are entitled to congratulate ourselves all around—I do, really. I say it's a deuced good-looking periodical we've turned out. I call it a respectable-looking, a gentlemanly sort of looking magazine. I'm not ashamed of it. I'm not ashamed to have it lying in my drawing-room, and when any one comes in I'm not ashamed if they take it up. What I say is, give a good thing, and charge a good price. I think twelve shillings is too much for this champagne, as I tell ye; but I consider it's as good a glass of wine as any I've got in my own cellar, and so I don't grumble. I'm for having good things. Give people good things, and they'll pay. A shilling a week is a good lot; but it looks respectable to have a thing like that lying about; it looks as if you wanted a country house or a steam-yacht, and were looking out. My wife had it lying in her drawing-room yesterday when Lady Ipswich called; and Lady Ipswich said she'd order it from her bookseller at once. Now that's what I like: I want to have it talked about in sassiety. And I hope, Clarke, your friend Gifford will give us a flaming article about it I'd have asked him to come down to-day, but I thought we'd better be private. I suppose you'll drop him a line!"

"Mr. Gifford," said Hilton Clarke, with a slight emphasis on the "Mr.," "is peculiar. It would be better to leave him to discover the extraordinary merits of the shilling's worth for himself. Oh, talking of discoveries, Fitzgerald," he added turning to his neighbor, "did you read the review of *Daphne's Shadow*?"

Fitzgerald, with a sudden flush, admitted that he had; but Hilton Clarke, not perceiving his embarrassment, or whatever it might have been, laughed lightly.

"That was the *Liberal Review* all over. The most portentous discoveries! The well-known this and the well-

known that under thin disguises; a wonderful study of contemporary life and society in England——”

“Then have you read the book? Do you think it is trumpery?” said Fitzgerald, eagerly; he was so anxious to justify himself to himself.

“The book!” said Hilton Clarke, with a sort of good-natured scorn. “To call such a thing a book! Twopence-halfpenny worth of persiflage: the rest of the coppers in cheek: then throw in a few allusions to current politics: and the British public will take your mere names as types of English character. What Gifford will do about our magazine it is impossible to say. He may think it trivial: he may regard it as the servant of Mammon, and he is not too well affected toward the rich. But one can’t say. He may make a discovery about it: about the possibility of converting fox-hunters to the study of higher things—who knows? And then when he gets into a tempest of conviction, he rides the whirlwind. He’d hang you in a minute to prove to you the impolicy of capital punishment.”

Well human nature is but human nature, after all: and it is possible that Fitzgerald, after that rejection of his anxiously written article, may not have been so quick as he would otherwise have been to resent these scornful taunts that Hilton Clarke occasionally directed against the *Liberal Review* and its editor. But none of these affected Master Willie’s secret consciousness that, if the two ways of regarding human life were offered him as alternatives, he would rather have that of the *Liberal Review* than that of the *Weekly Gazette*. The most desperate thing in the world seemed to him to be hopelessness. Your conviction might be wrong, but at least it gave you something to look forward for. And at twenty-three one is busier with the future than the past.

The evening went on pleasantly enough, and coffee and cigars did not tend to diminish that halo of success which already seemed to surround the new magazine. Indeed, so satisfied was Mr. Scobell with the gentlemanly appearance of the periodical, and with his own relations to the enterprise, that he broadly hinted his intention of sharing any great increase of prosperity with these coadjutors of his.

“I am not a money-grubber,” said he, leaning back in his chair to watch the smoke ascend. “I don’t worship the golden calf. I like to have plenty of money; and I have plenty of money——”

"I wish some more of us could say as much," said Hilton Clarke; but the remark was an unfair one, for Mr. Scobell was not really boasting of his wealth.

"I was going to say," continued the capitalist, glancing at Clarke somewhat reproachfully, "that I have plenty of money because I am not an extravagant man. I think when a man has a thorough well-managed establishment in town, a good cook and a good cellar, a couple of hacks for the Park, a barouche for his wife, and then, don't you know, a snug little place in the country, where he can keep a good glass of wine for his friends, and give them a day through the turnips, or a mount if they are hunting men, don't you know, I say he should be content, and not want to win the Derby, or have the biggest deer forest in Scotland. I haven't gone into literature to make money, not I. What I say is, if it is a big success, let them share it who made it——"

"Then Fitzgerald should have three-fourths," said Hilton Clarke, with a laugh, "for he has done three-fourths of the work."

"I don't say I wouldn't take a fair return for my money," said Mr. Scobell, grandly. "I don't say that. But when I go into literature, it isn't to make money. I want to have my name connected with a thorough good thing. I don't want to go into my club and hear men say, 'That's Scobell; he's the proprietor of a d——d low Radical print.' I say we should stick up for our own country. I don't see any better. If there's a country where you'll find better fighting men, and handsomer women—ay, and horses too—well, I don't know where it is. I think we are very well off. You can get the best of everything in London, if you'll only pay a fair price for it. Look at Covent Garden, now; what is there you can't get there? And then you get a lot of low trades-unionists and Radicals trying to stir up discontent, and setting class against class, trying to put a lot of stuff into the heads of the farm laborers. What I say is, let well alone. I don't see any other country better governed. I don't see any other country better off. If Church and State have brought us where we are, then I'm for Church and State; I want none o' their Liberty, Equality, and Stupidity. I say we're precious well off."

"You are, my dear Scobell, but I am not," observed Hilton Clarke, pleasantly. "However, you need have no fear of the *Household Magazine* adventuring on these troubled waters. We will assume that everything is for the best in

this favored island ; and in the mean time we had better think of getting to the railway station."

Here Mr. Earp, who was a large, heavy, bilious-looking man, and who had scarcely spoken all the evening, looked at his watch.

"There is one thing I would like to mention," he said, slowly. "Very soon people will be leaving town."

"Doubtless," said Hilton Clarke, whom he now particularly addressed.

"And you may be drawing attention to it in an article—perhaps more than once," the melancholy-looking man continued.

"Well, that is possible."

"Well, Mr. Clarke," said the other, hesitatingly, "if it is all the same to you, I would rather not have any such article. It is, if I may say so, imprudent. All the daily papers do it. They have articles about London being empty ; about the dead season ; about everybody being abroad. And then, you see, how can you ask the advertisers to keep on paying money, when you're telling them at the same time that everybody is away?"

"Oh, I see!" exclaimed Mr. Clark, as he rose from the table. "It is the advertisers you are thinking of?" And then he laughed, and put his hand on Fitzgerald's shoulder as they left the room together. "There, Fitzgerald, don't forget these hints. Rules for the editing of a newspaper, they might be called. 'Uphold Church and State; and in August don't remind advertisers that people have left town.'"

"We might have them printed and hung up in the office for the guidance of contributors," said his companion.

They returned to town apparently very well pleased with each other and with the prospects of the new periodical. But just before reaching Charing Cross something occurred which was calculated to give Fitzgerald a still more favorable recollection of that evening.

"I suppose you'll take a hansom, Fitzgerald?" Hilton Clarke asked of him, casually.

"No ; I'll walk," was the reply.

"Walk? To Fulham?"

"To the Fulham Road, at least."

It is impossible to say whether or no this answer may have suggested to Hilton Clarke some suspicion about

Fitzgerald's circumstances, but at all events he said, a minute after, and apparently without premeditation :—

“ Oh, I quite forgot, Fitzgerald, that you've drawn nothing from the treasury during these past weeks. That was my forgetfulness ; for I am responsible to you. Why didn't you remind me——”

“ It was of no consequence,” said Fitzgerald, hastily ; but how glad he was that Hilton Clarke had not had to be reminded !

“ Well, then, shall I give you something on account ? Oh, don't be bashful, man ! This is a business evening. I should not have been so remiss.”

“ It is of no consequence at all,” said Fitzgerald again : it was quite enough for him that his friend had remembered. He had had enough eating and drinking for a time. He would willingly go back to dry biscuits and apples.

“ When I was your age I knew what it was to be hard up,” continued Hilton Clarke, “ and sometimes I know it now when paymasters are neglectful. So I'm not going to incur that charge, whilst I remember. But I find I've only a sovereign or two. Scobell, lend me ten pounds, like a good fellow ; Earp can score it up against me at the office.”

“ Oh, certainly,” said Mr. Scobell, though he seemed a little surprised on hearing that Fitzgerald had up to that moment received no salary.

The two bank-notes were handed to Clarke, who in turn passed them on, and Fitzgerald, so far from having any hesitation about accepting them, was altogether delighted. He had looked forward with the utmost shrinking to the obvious necessity, sooner or later, of having to recall Hilton Clarke to a sense of his carelessness. It was now clear to him that Mr. Clarke would so have regarded an application from him—as a reminder that he had been culpably neglectful. And now to find this deplorable thing removed was an inexpressible relief ; and the first thought he had was that he would invest a portion of this sum in paying for a ride on an omnibus, get home quickly, and see if John Ross were still awake and at work, that he might, as he surely would, rejoice in the good fortune of his nearest neighbor.

When Fitzgerald reached the little courtyard in the Fulham Road, there was no doubt possible about Ross's being at home, whether he was at work or no, for loud and

martial strains were resounding through the big empty studio. It was with the utmost difficulty that Fitzgerald could make himself heard. Then the bawling suddenly ceased, and the door was opened.

"Come in, man, come in. What's the need o' ceremony? What for did ye wait to knock?"

"I heard the end of 'Scots wha hae' by waiting," said Master Willie, getting a chair for himself.

"Ay," said his host, fetching him a canister of tobacco, "I'm thinking King Edward, poor man, thought he was never going to hear the end o' they Scotch folk while he was alive. I daresay whenever he found himself with nothing to do—wi' half an hour to spare, like—he would say to his friends. 'Come and let us sit down and curse Scotland.' Well, now, what have ye been about? What has come over ye?"

"I have been very busy; but the magazine I was telling you about has come out at last; and to-night I have just got back from a dinner at Greenwich which was meant to celebrate the occasion."

"But ye're sober!" exclaimed the other.

"Why not?"

"What's the use o' going all that way for a dinner, if ye come home sober? Ay," said he, regarding him critically, "but if they've sent ye back sober, they've put an extra bit o' color in your cheeks. It's no often one sees color like that in London. It's no a London complexion at a'; it reminds one more o' a cornfield in summer, and a strapping young fellow lying by the side of a stook, wi' his face half turned away frae the sun. Man, I'd like to have a try at your head. You go on smoking, and let me hear all your story since I saw ye last. I'd just like to have a try."

He threw aside his pipe, and quickly stuck on his easel a sheet of light brown board, and took up his palette and colors. And then he began to walk up and down a bit, ultimately putting colors on the palette, and studying Fitzgerald's head from different points of view.

"Man," he said, "ye've more character about ye than I thought. Ye'll have a fine head when ye grow up."

Fitzgerald thought he had done growing, as he was three-and-twenty, and five foot ten. But by this time he was familiar with Ross's way of working, and with the jerky observations with which he usually accompanied that,

and so he did not interrupt. After a while Ross suddenly went to a portfolio that stood near the wall, and after having rudely tumbled about a number of sheets, he brought back a large and dusty photograph—of Giorgione's armed warrior in the Uffizi.

"That's what your head 'll be in middle age."

"That! I don't see the least likeness," said Fitzgerald.

"But I do. It's my business. Of course you'll no be dark like that, but that's your nose and forehead. Ay, and the mouth too. But the complexion makes a great difference; and the hair—have ye been burning yourself in the sun a' the day? Where got ye that straight nose in Ireland?"

"I suppose there are as many there as elsewhere," said Fitzgerald, trying to steal a look at the board on the easel, but failing.

"I dinna believe ye," said Ross, who was now working very eagerly, with snatches of contemplative whistling coming in at intervals. "I've watched the shearers that come over from Belfast. There's no one in twenty that escapes from the general type—the turned-up nose and long upper lip. Ay, and so the wonderful new magazine's out. We'll, tell us all about it, man; ye need no be feared about altering your expression; it's only the tan o' the sunlight I'm trying at, though whether I can do anything—but there's no two curls o' your hair the same color, man! What do you mean by that? There's an inconsistency about ye that's aggravating. Well, about the magazine?"

So Fitzgerald told him all that had happened; and dwelt on his great good fortune in having been able to make so early a start in London, thanks to one or two kind friends; and said how everybody was pleased at the prospects of this venture.

"Ay, ay," said the broad-shouldered, red-bearded little man, as he stepped back a yard or two from the easel, and regarded his handiwork, "and that may partly account for the color, as well as the warm day and the trip to Greenwich. The flush of success, eh? And I warrant there's a young lass somewhere that's just as pleased as yoursel'."

Then he suddenly bawled out in a prodigious and raucous voice, looking intently at his work the while:—

"And we'll tak a right guid-willie waught
For auld lang syne!"

However, this vocal outburst was not the result of self-satisfaction.

"What put it into my head," he continued, in a series of inconsecutive growls, as he stepped back, and then stepped forward, and then bit the end of his brush, "to try such a blaze of flesh-color? It's the most infernal thing in the world. I'm a landscape painter; at least I say I am; I think I'll take to house fronts and doorsteps. The portrait painting I can do is a wee dabbie o' red and white under an auld wife's cap if she's coming along the road about twa miles off.

" 'And we'll tak a right guid-willie waught' "—

But there was no joy left in the jovial song; nothing but perplexity and irritation.

"Don't bother about it to-night," said Master Willie. "Let's have a quiet smoke and a chat."

The next thing he saw was Ross suddenly advance and with one stroke drive his fist right through the frail board, sending the easel and everything flying and sprawling across the room. Then, that action having apparently assuaged his passion, he quietly took the palette from the thumb of his left hand and laid it down.

"I am a failure," he said, drawing along a chair to the bare wooden table. "Nothing I try will do. Ye are one 'o the lucky ones; only ye dinna ken the contentment there is in a glass o' good Scotch whiskey. I do. But d'ye think I'm to be cast down because I canna pent? No while I can light a pipe!"

"But it's nonsense your talking like that!" exclaimed Fitzgerald, who had been privileged to look over these canvases, and who, little as he knew about painting, had been greatly struck with the strangely vivid effects he saw here and there, along with, as he imagined, an absolute want of definite construction or technical skill. Amid all this confused chaos of impressions—which he was not surprised the dealers had for the most part regarded as quite hopeless—he had seen bits that were to him a sort of revelation. Moreover, he had gone out once or twice into the country with John Ross; he had listened to his talk; had watched the things he had pointed out; and it seemed to him that the world had grown a great deal more interesting since this red-haired Scotchman had taught him how to look at it.

"It is nonsense your talking like that," repeated Fitzgerald. "And very soon the world will find out, and will tell you, whether you can paint or not."

"But do I complain?" said the other, fetching over some fresh-water and a tumbler. "Do I howl? Have you seen me lie down on the floor and squeal? Bless the laddie, I've my wits left. And I'm thinking that, now this machine o' yours is fairly on the rails, ye'd better have a day's holiday the morn; and I'll take ye and show ye as fine a bit o' wilderness within five miles o' this very place as ye'd want to find in Canada. Will ye go?"

"Won't I? said Master Willie, who had discovered that a walk in the country with this keen-eyed, talkative, dogmatic person was in itself a sort of liberal education. But then again he added: "No, not to-morrow. We will put it off for a few days, till I see how this thing is really going."

"You are as cautious as a Scotchman," said his friend with a laugh. "Well, here's to the magazine, and to you, and to all good fellows; and may the black deil be aye a long way away from us!"

CHAPTER IX.

IN STRAITS.

THE high hopes that had been raised by the demand for the first number of the *Household Magazine* were very speedily abated. An ominously large number of the copies came back unsold from the news-venders. Worse than that, as week after week passed, the small minimum circulation on which, after these returns, they had calculated, showed signs of still further shrinking. In these disheartening circumstances it must be said for Mr. Scobell that he played a man's part; he accused nobody; he was not dismayed; nay, he ventured even yet to hope.

"Rome wasn't built in a day," he would say. "A shillin's a good lot. And if the public won't buy it, at all events we've done our best. I'm not ashamed of it when I e it on a book-stall. I'm not ashamed to see it lying on

the table of my club. I say there's nothing to be ashamed of about it. I call it a gentlemanly-looking thing. We'll have to be content with small beginnings. Mind a shillin', a shillin'."

Hilton Clarke, on the other hand, was disappointed, and inclined to be peevish, and openly laid the blame on the management. There was no pushing of the magazine. They had not spent enough money in advertising. Indeed, he very soon showed that he was hopeless of the whole affair; and it was only by the exercise of much tact that Fitzgerald kept him, as far as he could be kept, to his duties as editor.

With Fitzgerald, however, he remained great friends; and it was Master Willie's privilege to listen, for many a half-hour together, to his companion's ingenious and clever talking, that was full of a very curious and subtle penetration in literary matters. Once or twice it almost seemed to him a pity that a man who could talk so well should not write a little more; and indeed on one occasion he went the length of hinting to Mr. Hilton Clarke that the world had a right to expect from him some more definite work than he had already done. They were walking in Hyde Park.

"You mean some substantive publication?" said he, as he crumbled up some bread he had brought with him, and began to throw it to the ducks in the Serpentine, this being a favorite amusement of his. "I doubt whether the public care much about viewy books. They can manage an essay now and again. I have thought of it, though. I could bring together two or three things I have written, under some such title as 'Laws and Limitations of Art.'"

"Why not?" said Fitzgerald, eagerly. Here, indeed, would be something he could triumphantly place before Kitty. No longer would she be able to ask of his literary hero, "What has he done?" "I am sure it would be most interesting," he continued. "I am sure no one could make such a subject more interesting; and it wants clearness; there is so much confusion—about it."

"But some day or other——"

"That is what you are always saying."

"Wait a bit. I say some day or other I mean to tackle something with a trifle more of human nature in it. I might begin it in the *Household Magazine*, only it would be

thrown away on squires. Perhaps it would not run to a book."

"But the subject?"

"The Private Meditations of Zenobia's Husband."

"Zenobia's husband—?"

"I forget what the gentleman's name was; most people do; that's the point of the situation. But you remember that the lovely and virtuous Queen of Palmyra *had* a husband; and he must have had his own little thoughts about things. I suppose now," he continued, throwing away the last of the crumbs, and linking his arm in his companion's as they set out again—"I suppose now you think that before writing such a book I ought to go and qualify by marrying somebody."

"You might do worse."

"I doubt it. I shall never marry. Life is only endurable when you have all round you an atmosphere of possibility. Then the unexpected may happen; each new day may bring new relations. But when you marry, your fate is fixed; life is closed, the romance of it vanished——"

"But what do you call the romance of it?" said Fitzgerald, bluntly. "Going philandering after another man's wife?"

"I perceive, Mr. Fitzgerald," said Hilton Clarke, blandly, "that on one occasion I must have been indiscreet. However, as you don't even know the name of the lady of the cigars, no great harm has been done. Feuerbach, if you remember, maintains that a being without attributes is non-existent. Now a person whose sole attribute, so far as you know, is that she smokes cigars, can only exist a very little bit, as far as you are concerned. The Lady Irmingarde, now: she wouldn't allow even a cigarette to sully the purity of her sweet mountain air."

"The Lady Irmingarde?" Fitzgerald repeated, innocently.

"I can imagine her. A coquettish nose; very blue eyes; a little freckled; a mischievous laugh; and a figure that would go charmingly in a short dress with a milking-pail."

"It doesn't take much trouble to imagine all that," said Fitzgerald. "You can see it any day in an operetta."

"Well, you know, some prefer the maid with the milking-pail, while some prefer a woman of the world, with wit and courage and dexterity, as well as beauty. Don't let us

quarrel. In fact, Fitzgerald," he said, in a franker way of speaking, but still with that careless air, "I am rather in a muddle. Who was it who said, 'My mind to me a kingdom is'; My kingdom, I know, sometimes gets very rebellious—tries to push me off the throne, in fact. If it doesn't take care, I'll abdicate altogether. And so to let matters settle down a little, I am going to retreat for a while to Dover. I was thinking of running down this afternoon——"

"But the article for to-morrow?" exclaimed his assistant editor.

"Oh, you can get something or other—do, like a good fellow. Print one of your 'Confessions of a Young Man.' I think they are excellent. It won't be throwing much away; for you can forward it to a publisher, and ask him to judge of the bulk by the sample, It will look better in type. You won't mind sacrificing one of them; and I'll do as much for you some other time."

This was the last of Hilton Clarke that Fitzgerald saw for many a day; and after his chief's departure for Dover, he very speedily found that the whole work of editing the magazine and writing the literary section of it had to be borne on his own shoulders. Occasionally a few contributions would be sent up from the Lord Warden Hotel; but they were slight and unimportant. Nevertheless Fitzgerald would not admit even to himself that this conduct showed any want of consideration on the part of his friend and hero. What if this seclusion were to lead to the production of one or other of those books that had been vaguely indicated? Ought he not to be proud to have the chance of lending a helping hand in this way? Or—for this suspicion would crop up from time to time—suppose that Hilton Clarke had got into some delicate entanglement in London from which the only sure escape was his prolonged absence from town? Master Willie worked away as hard as he could, and bore with equanimity the remonstrances of Mr. Scobell about the absence of the editor, and sacrificed not one only but several of the "Confessions of a Young Man," and tried to give the best account he could of his circumstances in his long letters to Kitty.

There was one very serious consideration, however, that could not be speciously glossed over: he was again almost penniless. Not even in leaving London had Hilton Clarke made any reference to money matters, though by that time

he was very considerably in Fitzgerald's debt. For all his work on the magazine the latter had received nothing beyond the ten pounds Hilton Clarke had handed over on the journey back from Greenwich; and that sum, welcome as it was, could not be expected to last forever, even if Kitty's birthday had not intervened, demanding a little souvenir. Sovereign after sovereign went, despite the most rigid economy. Again and again the dire necessity of having to remind Hilton Clarke of his thoughtlessness arose before his mind, and again and again he would put that off for a few days, making sure that Clarke would remember and write to him of his own accord. He had himself to blame. It was not a proper arrangement. He ought to have insisted on being put on some definite footing at the office, instead of being thus contracted out, as it were. That Hilton Clarke had drawn the full sum, month by month, he knew, for Mr. Silas Earp had casually mentioned it. It was beyond measure distressing to him to think of his friend being thus cruelly inconsiderate; but he held his peace, and went on with his work, and hoped for the best.

One night he was sitting alone, and perhaps rather down-hearted, for he had had no letter from Kitty these two days back, when he heard his Scotch friend ascending the stairs outside. John Ross had been for some time absent, sketching up the Thames; and the solitary lodging in the Fulham Road had been even more solitary since his departure. Master Willie was glad to hear that brisk foot-step outside.

Then the sharp-eyed little red-haired man came into the room, and seemed to take in the whole situation at a glance.

"What's the matter with ye, man? Hard work? The London air? Are ye in the dumps about some young lass?"

"Well," said Fitzgerald, brightening up, "maybe I have been working too hard. The magazine isn't a very great success so far, you know. I have been offering some things in one or two other quarters; but it's like trying to squeeze through the eye of a needle."

"Time enough, time enough," said John Ross. "Your face is no the right color."

Then he glanced suspiciously around.

"Where's your supper?" he said abruptly.

Fitzgerald flushed, and said, hastily.

“Oh, supper? supper? It isn't nine yet, is it?”

“It's nearer ten. Now look here, my lad; you come down the stairs with me, and I'll show ye something. A fellow has sent me a kippered salmon frae the Solway, and if ye've never tasted a kippered salmon, then ye dinna ken how bountiful Providence has been to mortals. Come away down, man, and I'll brander ye a steak that 'll make your mouth water—to say nothing o' your een, if ye happen to come across a wee bit lump o' pepper.”

He would hear of no excuse; he carried off Fitzgerald; went below, and lit the gas in the big gaunt studio; also the stove; laid the table; cut a couple of steaks from the firm, ruddy-brown fish, and put them on the gridiron; fetched tumblers and bottles; and then, as he stood over the gridiron, and turned the salmon steaks with a fork, he regaled his companion with “Auld Lang Syne,” one line whistled, the next sung, with occasionally a bit of a double shuffle coming in. It was clear that he was in very excellent spirits, or pretended to be.

Then, when he had popped the frizzling hot steaks on a plate, and put them on the table, he drew in a couple of chairs.

“Come away, my boy. Pass the bread. Fitz, my laddie, I'm going to ask ye an impertinent question. Have ye got any money?”

He affected to be very busy in cutting the loaf, and fetching a couple of lemons, and so on, so that he should not see any embarrassment his companion might betray.

“Not very much,” was the answer, with a doubtful kind of laugh.

“I dinna want to borrow. I want ye to tell me if you've got any, that's all.”

“As I say, I haven't very much.”

“Have ye got any?” said the other, pertinaciously, and for a moment fixing his keen eyes on him.

“I've got four shillings,” said Fitzgerald “It isn't what you might call a princely fortune; but while I have it I sha'n't starve.”

“Are ye so sure o' that?” said John Ross, pretending to be much occupied with the lemon he held. “I'm thinking ye *have* been starving yourself. Now I'm flush. And it's so seldom in my life I've had ower much money, I'd just like to try the effect o' lending ye a pound or two. Just think o' the luck! Just tell me this is anything but luck!

There am I sitting in front o' the inn one afternoon, having a pipe, and little else to do. 'Landlord,' says I, 'get down your sign, man, and I'll repaint it for you.' Away the fat old fellow goes, and fetches a ladder, and down comes the rickety old board. Then soap and water, and a rub over with megilp. Man, I took a fancy to the thing; the sod-ger's red coat was fine, and I put in some trees, beside the inn, and a bit of a glimmer o' sunlight down the road. Ma certes, when it was dry, and hung up on the iron rod again, it looked fine, I can tell ye? And that very afternoon—just think of the luck o't!—by comes a gentleman, and he wants a drink of meal and water for his horse, and he begins' to ask the landlord about the sign, and what does the fellow do but ask him to go in and look at my sketches?—me away down the river at the time in a punt. And then the upshot was that he bought two at £10 apiece; that was £20; and if the half o' that would be of use to you, ye're welcome to the loan of it, and may ye live until I ask-ye for it!"

Fitzgerald was deeply touched by this kindness on the part of one who knew almost nothing about him. What, indeed, could Ross know? It is true, the lad had clear and honest eyes, that were likely to win the confidence of a stranger; but it is more probable that this friendly offer was in great measure the result of that sort of subtle freemasonry that seems to exist among those who have a romantic affection for out-of-door sports and sights and sounds, and who have had opportunities of talking over these together.

"Are ye proud?" said John Ross, sharply.

"I don't know how to thank you," said Fitzgerald, simply. "I—I think it is tremendously kind of you. I would take it in a minute if there was need——"

"How long do ye expect to live on four shillings?" demanded the other.

But then Fitzgerald proceeded to explain how there was a very considerable sum of money owing to him, and how from day to day he had been expecting it, or part of it.

"Bless me, laddie, ye seem to be clean daft!" Ross cried. "To go starving yourself deliberately, out o' sensitiveness for another man's feelings! Let him be as sensitive about you, to begin with! Nonsense, nonsense, man; get hold o' the money at once! I would make a hundred and fifth applications for it before I'd let both soul and body go down

into my boots. The picture ye were when I went up to your room a while since! A snuff for his fine feelings!"

"Oh, but you don't know how grateful I ought to be to this Hilton Clarke," contended Fitzgerald, cheerfully. "Mind you, I've just been finding out for myself how difficult it is to get an entrance into London literature. And you see through him I got employment right at the beginning——"

"What on earth is the use of employment that ye're no paid for?"

"But the money is there. I can have it for the asking."

"In God's name ask for it, then!" said his emphatic companion. "I dinna want to have to attend a funeral. A nice thing it would be for me to ken ye were just over my head, lying in a wooden box. No more kippered salmon for ye then. No more ale for ye—it is pretty clear, isn't it? No more long letters from a young lass somewhere. It's no *that* that's putting ye out?" he added, with another sharp glance.

"No, no; there's no trouble there." said Fitzgerald, brightly. "Nor, indeed, anywhere. I will hang on as long as I can with my four shillings; then, if I don't hear by that time, I will write. Now we will light up; and you will let me see the sketches you have brought back from the Thames."

They lit their pipes. But before fetching the canvases, Ross stepped over to a dusky recess, and brought back a brace of wild-duck—both beautifully-plumaged mallard—and threw them down.

"There," said he, "that's better than sketches. Take them with ye, since ye're bent on starving yourself. Bonnie birds, aren't they? That shows ye the use o' having a gun lying beside ye when ye're sketching in a punt."

"If you'd only bring some whiskey with you," said Fitzgerald, laughing, "I think I could afford to ask you to have some dinner with me to-morrow night."

"But I will," responded his companion, seriously. "Dinner, or supper, or what ye like. And the next night as well, if ye're willin'; I'll see ye have two good meals before they make a corpse o' ye; and one wild duck makes a good enough dinner, an excellent dinner, for two folks. Eh, man, if I had had a bit spaniel wi' me! Many's and many's the time I heard the duck quite close by me in the rushes,

dipping their bills and flapping their wings. Then away would go the mallard with a whirr like a policeman's rattle; and then you'd hear the mother quack, quacking to the brood. Catch her leaving them till she had got them hidden somewhere! The drake, I'm thinking, is like the buck rabbit: catch a buck rabbit warning anybody, so long as he can show a clean pair o' heels and a white fud! but the doe, when ye startle her, down comes her hind-legs on the ground with a whack ye can hear a hundred yards off, and if the young ones dinna take heed o' that, they deserve what they're likely to get."

"Yes—but the sketches?" suggested Fitzgerald.

His companion had contentedly sat down again.

"Oh, ay. I got some work done—I did a good deal o' work. Did ye ever see a kingfisher fishing?"

"No; they're not common with us in the south of Ireland."

"Man, I watched one for near half an hour last week, and the whole o' that time he never stirred a feather. He was on a stone, or maybe it was a withered stump, under a bush that was hanging over the water. I was beginning to doubt but that somebody had stuffed him, and put him there to make a fool o' folk, when snap! down went 'his head and neck, and the next second there he was with a small fish crosswise in his beak. Then he twitched his head, or maybe he was striking the fish on the stump; then there was no fish visible; and then a kind o' streak o' blue flame went down across the rushes; that was the gentleman himself going off in a flash o' glory, as it were."

"Did you put him in your sketch?" asked Fitzgerald, insidiously.

"It's an ungainly kind o' a beast, too," continued John Ross, taking no heed of the hint. "Stumpy in shape. And there are too many colors when he's standing still like that. But once he's well on the wing you see nothing but blue—just a flash o' blue fire, that's fine enough when it crosses a long, standing clump o' yellow rushes; but then again when it crosses a dark bit o' shadow it's more than that; it gives a kind o' metallic jerk that gets beyond color a'thegither. I used to sit and watch for them. It becomes a sort o' fascination; it's like waiting to hear a pistol-shot when ye see a man aiming."

"I suppose you did a little painting as well while you were up the river?" inquired Master Willie, dexterously.

“Pent? Bless the laddie, what did I go there for but to pent? I pented a signboard to begin wi’, which was a good honest piece o’ work; and I made fifteen sketches at least; and I came home £20 richer than when I went away, just to find a young idjut wearing himself away for want o’ the common necessaries o’ life. For that’s what it comes to, my callant; and if ye’ll no take the £10 I offer ye, I’ll no leave grup o’ ye until ye write and get the money that’s your ain.”

And indeed that was what it did come to; for so persistent was the Scotchman that before he let his companion go that night Fitzgerald had definitely promised that the next day, if no letter arrived for him in the morning, he would write to Dover, and remind Mr. Hilton Clarke that even the most willing hack must have its handful of corn.

CHAPTER X.

NEW FRIENDS.

JUST at this moment an incident occurred which seemed slight enough in itself, but which proved to have somewhat far-reaching consequences. Among these “Confessions of a Young Man” which Fitzgerald had been forced to print in the *Household Magazine* for lack of more substantial material was a paper entitled “On Murder.” It was chiefly an essay on the doubts of a young sportsman over the killing of beautiful and innocent creatures—his compunction on seeing them lying on the grass stone-dead and besmeared with blood, or, worse still, ineffectually fluttering with broken wing to try to get away from him on his approach. Or suppose he has wounded one of those sea-birds that are extraordinarily tenacious of life, and finds himself forced to murder in cold blood, and with protracted difficulty, this beautiful, wild-eyed panting thing? Who could ever forget the mute glance of a wounded roe-deer? Or fail to be struck with remorse at the piteous squeal of a kicking and struggling hare? These were the moments of reflection, of contemplation, that occurred in the eagerness of pursuit; they were not pleasant—especially to the sportsman who

was alone. But then again the paper went on to speak of doubts on the other side—doubts whether it was not possible to cultivate sentiment to an unwholesome degree. To live by the taking of life was a universal law of nature. Animals had to be killed for food; and if it was objected that the sportsman shot for amusement and not for the procuring of food, one might ask a rabbit which he preferred, to be killed outright by a charge of No. 5 shot, even in the way of amusement, or to be snared by the keepers for the market, strangling for a couple of hours perhaps with the brass wire getting tighter and tighter. Then the training and hardihood and skill and health of the highest of all the animals had to be considered. In short, the whole essay was a conflict between Mr. W. Fitzgerald as a hardy eager, and practised wild-fowl stalker and Mr. W. Fitzgerald as a literary person of acute, and perhaps even poetic, sympathies.

It is just possible that a consciousness of the impossibility of reconciling these two people had been borne in upon the writer of the article during its progress: he wound up with an appeal *ad rem*; that is to say, a description of a day's cliff-shooting in the south of Ireland. How, he asked, could one be expected to pause and consider such questions at such a time in such a place? The Atlantic thundering on the rocks below; the steep cliffs ablaze in the sunlight; the dark mystery of the caves; then a sudden whirr of half a dozen pigeons, the quick snap-shot right and left (your feet the while steadying you on a ledge not fourteen inches wide), and then the scramble down to the beach after the slain. The exhilaration of sky, and ocean, and buffeting sea-winds was fatal, he contended, to metaphysics: even the still small voice of conscience was lost in one's anxiety not to slip on the close crisp turf, and go headlong into the sea below. And so forth, and so forth. However the conflict may have gone in the previous portions of the essay, it was the pupil of Andy the Hopper that had the last word.

Well, on the day following the publication of this article, the following note came to the office:—

“Mrs. Chetwynd presents her compliments to the editor of the *Household Magazine*, and would be much obliged if he would kindly acquaint her with the name and address of

the writer of the papers entitled ‘The Confessions of a Young Man.’

“HYDE PARK GARDENS, *Monday 17th.*”

Now Fitzgerald had had enough experience of the multitude of people who write to newspaper offices on the slightest pretext, and he scarcely looked at this note twice. No doubt, if he sent his name and address, he would receive in reply a pamphlet by a member of the Anti-vivisectionist Society, or an appeal for a subscription to the Home for Lost Dogs, or some such thing. So he merely sent a polite reply, in his capacity as assistant editor, to the effect that it was a rule of the office not to furnish such information, and thought no more of the matter.

However the next day brought another note.

“DEAR SIR,—I respectfully apologize for my intrusion, but I think if you knew the circumstances of the case you would not refuse the request which my aunt made to you yesterday. She is an old lady who has met with a great sorrow; and she has been very much interested in the series of papers mentioned in her note, as recalling to her something of one who was dear to her. I may say frankly that she is very desirous of seeing the gentleman who wrote these papers, if only to thank him for the pleasure he has given her; and I am sure he would not grudge giving up a few minutes of his time some afternoon, if you would have the kindness to forward this request to him.

“I am, dear Sir,

“Your obedient servant,

“MARY CHETWYND.

“HYDE PARK GARDENS, *Tuesday,*”

Fitzgerald paid more attention to this note, and even re-read it carefully—with some little admiration of the pretty handwriting. No doubt, also, in other circumstances, he would not have hesitated for a moment to respond to this simple, frank, and kindly invitation. But the truth was, at this moment he was in no mood for making new acquaintances. Not a word or line had come from Dover, and his four shillings had been reduced to eighteenpence. Kitty was in Dublin; her engagement finished; her immediate prospects somewhat uncertain. Moreover, if it came to that, his clothes were a trifle too shabby for the paying of

afternoon calls; and so having written a formal note as from the editor, informing Miss Chetwynd that her letter had been forwarded to the contributor referred to, he folded up the sheet of note-paper and laid it aside, considering the correspondence closed.

Two days after, he found among the letters awaiting him at the office one with the welcome Dover postmark on it. He eagerly opened it.

“DEAR FITZGERALD,—Don’t be in a hurry. I’ll make it all right.

“Yours ever,

“HILTON CLARKE.

“P. S.—I enclose a bit of copy.”

He looked at that for some time, not knowing what to think. In the midst of his perplexity Mr. Scobell made his appearance; and Mr. Scobell was evidently in a very bad temper.

“I say, Fitzgerald, this won’t do at all, you know,” said he putting his hat down and taking a chair. “I say this won’t do at all. I’ve stood it long enough.”

“What?” said the assistant editor, calmly.

“You know very well. I’m not going to put my money into a thing simply for the amusement of somebody else. I say it isn’t fair; I don’t call it gentlemanly. The magazine is going down every week; I say the circulation is going down; and it never was much, and it’ll soon be nothing. And all the time I’m paying my money to a gentleman who amuses himself at Dover. I won’t stand it. It’s false pretences. I pay him; he’s my servant; and he should do his work.”

“But he writes there,” said Fitzgerald. “I have just this minute got an article in MS. from him.”

“Oh, it’s no use trying to humbug me——”

“I beg your pardon, I am not trying to humbug you,” said Fitzgerald, with an angry color in his face. “And if you’ve got any complaint to make against Hilton Clarke, you might make it to himself. I’m not responsible for him.”

“No, nobody is responsible, and the magazine is going to the devil!” exclaimed Mr. Scobell. “That’s just it. I’m losing money every week, and nobody is responsible.”

Master Willie was on the point of saying that precious

little of Mr. Scobell's money had found its way into his pocket ; but he refrained.

"Has Hilton Clarke ever denied his responsibility?" said he, somewhat warmly. "It is not necessary for an editor always to be on the spot. If the magazine is not succeeding, it is a pity ; but I suppose it was a commercial speculation, like any other. I consider that Hilton Clarke has put very good work into it ; and his name as editor was of itself valuable——"

"Look here, Fitzgerald," said Mr. Scobell, in a milder tone, "I'm not complaining of you. You are doing your work well enough—and Clarke's too, for the matter of that. You may stick up for him if you like ; but what I say is that it isn't fair of him to go and neglect his business. I pay him. Confound it! I pay him ; he takes my money, and amuses himself at the Lord Warden Hotel. If you were getting his salary, I could understand your sticking up for him. And the airs he gives himself! 'Scobell, my dear fellow.' But he takes my money ; and I'm getting tired of it ; and that's the long and the short of it."

"I don't think," said Fitzgerald, slowly, as if he wanted to gain nerve—"I don't think, Mr. Scobell, that if Mr. Clarke knew you were discontented, he would wish you to continue the magazine. He would probably ask you to give it up at once."

"Discontented!" exclaimed Scobell, with a not unnatural indignation. "Haven't I a right to be discontented? Isn't it losing me money every week?"

"But that possibility was before you when you started it," observed Fitzgerald, respectfully.

"Oh, I don't care about supply and demand and all that d——d nonsense," said Mr. Scobell, somewhat inappropriately. "Theories don't make the loss of money any the pleasanter. And I say to myself, Why should I go on losing money? I never proposed to pay for keeping Hilton Clarke at the Lord Warden Hotel. That wasn't spoken of when I started the magazine. What do I gain by it? It isn't even known as my magazine, losing as it is ; it is Hilton Clarke's ; it's his name that's connected with it in everybody's mouth—that is, when anybody speaks of it. But they don't. They don't even cut the edges of it at my club. I go into my club, and I ask people about the articles in it ; they don't know anything about them. I have mentioned it when I have gone into sassiety ; no one has heard

of it. What is it to me? What am I paying for? Why, when I wrote a paragraph about a new brand of champagne imported by a particular friend of mine, I couldn't get it printed in my own magazine! I like that! He struck it out without saying a word."

"Oh no; I struck it out," said Fitzgerald.

"You!" said Mr. Scobell, with an angry glare.

"It was agreed at the very outset that there was to be no private influence like that brought to bear," said Fitzgerald, respectfully, but quite coolly. "That kind of thing is fatal to a paper. A single paragraph that the public would suspect would ruin it——"

"How far off ruin is it now?" said the other, scornfully.

"Well," said Fitzgerald, "I did what I thought was right; and I don't want to shirk the responsibility. I know it is what Hilton Clarke would have done; and I was acting for him; and I had no time to ask him first. But if you are dissatisfied with the magazine as a whole," he continued, formally, "or with my share in it, the remedy is simple, as far as I am concerned. You may consider my place vacant from this minute."

He rose. Scobell seemed rather disconcerted for a second; but immediately he said:—

"Sit down, Fitzgerald. Wait a moment. I'm not blaming you; you've done your best; you've done all the work; I wish to goodness we had started with you as editor, and saved Hilton Clarke's salary."

"Considering that the idea of the magazine was his——" Fitzgerald tried to interpolate; but the proprietor was bent on mollifying him, and would not be interrupted.

"What's more, though I say it to your face, when I have heard any one in my own circle speak of the magazine at all, it has been about those papers of yours. Mrs. Chetwynd spoke to me yesterday. She said she had written to you. Now that's what I like. I like to be connected with something that is spoken of among a good set of people. I confess to a little weakness that way; I like to be able to say something about the magazine, and hear it approved by the best people. And I said you would be delighted to call."

"I didn't know that was part of my duties," said Fitzgerald, somewhat stiffly.

"What?" replied Mr. Scobell, with a stare.

"To go and call on strangers. Why should I call on Mrs. Chetwynd? I never heard of her."

"God bless my soul! never heard of the Chetwynds!" exclaimed Mr. Scobell. "There are no better-known people in London. The very best people are glad to know them. I used to meet Mrs. Chetwynd everywhere in society, until her nephew died. Her husband you must have heard of; why, he was deputy-lieutenant of my own county before they made him Governor of Tasmania. And she was one of the Cork Barrys; she was delighted to hear you were a countryman of hers. Not know the Chetwynds! But you will be charmed with them, I assure you. I will take you there myself if you like."

Not only, however, did Fitzgerald decline this magnanimous offer, but he even hinted that he would much rather not go and call on these strangers. He was not familiar with the ways of London life, he was busily occupied, and so forth. Whereupon Mr. Scobell, who appeared to have promised Mrs. Chetwynd that she should make the acquaintance of the young man, went on a different tack altogether, and appealed to his generosity. It appeared that this poor old lady had recently lost her nephew, in whom her whole life had been bound up. She had adopted him as her son; she had left him in her will everything belonging to her—for his sister, Mary Chetwynd, was already amply provided for; she had made over to him by deed of gift a small property in Cork, on the shores of Bantry Bay. Then a luckless stumble when he was out riding one day in Windsor Park brought an end to all the fair hopes of which he was the centre; and since then the old lady seemed to do nothing but mourn his memory, while keeping up a strange and keen interest in the various pursuits he had followed. She knew all the hunting appointments; she read accounts of the new breech loaders; she took in the sporting papers. And somehow or other she had got it into her head that these "Confessions of a Young Man" were just such essays as would have been written by this beloved nephew of hers if he had turned his mind to literature; for they were continually touching on the sports and pastimes that he enjoyed. Was it wonderful that she should wish to see the writer? Was it a great sacrifice for him to give up ten minutes of an afternoon to please an old woman who had suffered much, and who was near the grave? The upshot of Mr. Scobell's representations and

entreaties was that Fitzgerald agreed to call at the house in Hyde Park Gardens on the following afternoon.

But until then? Well, he had discovered that cocoa-nut with new bread was an excellent thing with which to stave off the pangs of hunger, and he had a few coppers left, while in the evening, on getting down to the Fulham Road, he took the precaution of putting out the light early, and slipping off to bed, so that John Ross should not think he had come home. The worst of it was that ~~this~~ extreme privation produced deplorable fits of sleeplessness; and as the brain seems to take a pleasure in painting the gloomiest possible pictures in the middle of the night, the thing that haunted him chiefly was the prospect of his having to visit a pawnbroker's shop. He thought of the man looking at him; he felt his own self-consciousness tingling in his face; he wondered whether he should be suspected of being a thief. No; he could not do that. He could not go into a pawnbroker's shop. He would go out into the open streets rather, and offer to sell his boots to the first passer-by. Besides (this was the cheering thought that came with the first gray light of the morning) he had still some pence left; and cocoa-nut and bread was not an expensive meal; and who could tell but that Hilton Clarke had at last taken enough trouble to reckon up what was owing to him, and had already sent it off?

About four o'clock the next afternoon, Mr. Scobell called at the office and persuaded Fitzgerald to accompany him to Hyde Park Gardens. In the brougham, as they were driving up, he endeavored to impress his companion with a sense of the advantages of getting into good society. It was so important for a young man. True, the Chetwynds did not entertain as they had done before the sad death of the nephew; but good people—people one ought to know—went about the house. Fitzgerald, who rather felt himself in the position of a slave being carried off for exhibition, listened in silence. He had had nothing to eat since breakfast; perhaps it was that circumstance that made the prospect of being introduced to "good people" a somewhat intangible benefit.

However, after all, as it turned out, he was glad he went, for he was quite delighted with this old lady, whom he found propped up in an easy-chair by the side of the tall French window. He forgot all about Mr. Scobell's pompous patronage of him; he ignored his presence alto-

gether, indeed, for he was so charmed with this little dainty white-haired woman, who talked so sweetly, and with a touch of sadness too, and who, moreover, had just the faintest something in her tone that told him that she too in her youth must have heard the chimes of St. Anne's. Did he know Bantry? she asked. Why, of course he did. And Glengariff? Certainly. Bearhaven? He had only seen that in the distance. Perhaps he had never heard of Boat of Garry?

She seemed to hesitate a little as she mentioned this last place; and as Fitzgerald was replying that he had not heard of it—that, indeed, he did not know much of Bantry Bay—she was silent for a second or so, and he thought there was a little moisture in her eyes, and that her mouth was inclined to be tremulous. But that passed instantly. The pretty little old lady grew quite cheerful again; she said she could see in his writing that he was what the Bantry people called a “great sporter,” and wondered how he could write so much when he seemed to spend all his life out of doors.

“That is all over now,” said Fitzgerald. “I’ve sold myself into slavery.”

“And do you find London a lonely place?”

“Yes, rather.”

“But you will soon make plenty of friends. Where can Mary be, I wonder?”

Just at this moment, as if in answer to her question, the door was opened, and a young lady came into the room and went up and shook hands with Mr. Scobell.

“Mr. Fitzgerald,” said the old lady, “let me introduce you to my niece.”

As he rose he found before him a tall young woman, who had exceedingly shrewd and clear and yet merry eyes, a fine face, handsome rather than pretty, and with a good deal of decision in it. Altogether the first impression produced on him by this young lady was not entirely sympathetic. He liked gentleness in women. This young person looked as if she could take very good care of herself. However, this first impression was modified when she spoke. She had a soft and musical voice, beautifully modulated; and she talked with a bright cheerfulness and frankness that was pleasant to hear. For one thing, he thought it strange that her dress, which was scrupulously plain and

neat, should not be black, seeing that it was for her brother that Mrs. Chetwynd appeared to be still in mourning.

"I suppose auntie has apologized to you, Mr. Fitzgerald," said she, "and I ought to, also. You must have thought me terribly intrusive; but I think our friends have spoiled us with their kindness of late; and soon I expect to find auntie printing on her cards of invitation, 'Mrs. Chetwynd commands the attendance of So-and-so at five o'clock tea on Tuesday next.' Really they are too kind; and but for that I don't know what my aunt would do, because I have to be so much out of the house at present.

"How you find time for all you have to do, Mary, I can't make out," said the pleasant old lady. "You see, Mr. Fitzgerald, I get blinder and blinder every day, and Mary has to be my eyes for me. But this is the worst of it, that I am a silly old woman, and like to have read to me nice things. Mary is of the younger generation, and cares for nothing but science, and education, and teaching people how many miles it is to the sun, as if there was any chance of their getting there. It is really too hard on her; and I can scarcely read at all now; and the way she sacrifices her time——"

"It isn't my time that is to be considered at all, Mr. Scobell," said the young lady, brightly, "but you have no idea what my aunt will insist on my reading to her. Pretty stories and poems of the affections. I do believe nothing would please her so much as a whole column of the sentimental verses—breaking hearts and the rest of it—that the local poets send to the country newspapers."

"But aren't these interesting enough?" says Fitzgerald, perhaps conscious that he himself had appeared frequently in that quarter.

"They are a little monotonous, are they not?" said the young lady of the clear eyes, regarding him with something like scrutiny. "A little too much of love and dove, and posies and roses?"

"At all events, they are human nature," said he, with some slight flush in his face. "If they are not merely literary imitations—if they are the real expression of the hopes, or fancies, or feelings of the writers, I can not imagine anything more interesting. It is a human life laid bare; and that to me is more interesting than a frog's foot, or the question whether there is bismuth in the moon."

She regarded him for a moment curiously. Then she rose.

"You will excuse me, Mr. Scobell; I have to get to Whitechapel by half-past five. Good-bye, Auntie dear!"

She kissed her aunt; she bowed to Fitzgerald, and left the room. Fitzgerald, without knowing why, experienced a sense of relief.

How pretty this dear little old lady looked, sitting in state there, with the warm afternoon light lending a faint color to the somewhat worn and sad face! Fitzgerald thought he had never seen such silvery hair. And she seemed pleased to have visitors; she prattled away about the things of the hour, and what this or that distinguished person was doing; and all through, by a chance remark here or there, she would remind Fitzgerald that she was his countrywoman. And when they rose to leave, she made a direct appeal to Master Willie to come and see her again whenever he had an idle half-hour; for she was an inquisitive old woman, she said; and she could not read; and she liked to know what was going on.

When they got outside, Fitzgerald's admiration broke forth.

"Well, that is a most delightful old lady!" he exclaimed. "It is simply delightful to hear her talk. And she seems to have known everybody worth knowing for the last sixty years."

"Yes," said Mr. Scobell, in his lofty manner, as the footman opened the door of his brougham for him. "Yes. They are a good sort of people, the Chetwynds. They are very well known in sassiety. I have a few more calls to make. 'Ta, ta.'"

So Fitzgerald set out to walk home. He had had some tea and a piece of cake; and that was cheering; in fact, it had raised his spirits so much that he now resolved that if John Ross were at home, he would frankly ask him for a share of his supper that evening; and he knew pretty well that Ross would be as glad to give it as he to get it. It was not, however, his supper that chiefly occupied his thoughts as he walked down to the Fulham Road. More than once he kept thinking of Mary Chetwynd, and of her manner toward him, and of what that could possibly be that called her to Whitechapel.

CHAPTER XI.

A DISCLOSURE.

QUITE clearly, matters were approaching a climax. Notwithstanding all his shifts and devices, Fitzgerald was at length forced to accept a loan of a few pounds from his neighbor below, and he at the same time sent an urgent note to Hilton Clarke, representing how his affairs stood. Of course he never doubted but that that appeal would be instantly answered.

Days passed; there were no tidings of any sort. Finally two letters that had been forwarded to the Lord Warden Hotel were returned through the Post Office, with the intimation that Mr. Hilton Clarke had gone away and left no address.

Fitzgerald, very much aghast, took these letters to Mr. Silas Earp. The heavy, black-a-vised manager regarded them in his usually lugubrious way, and merely observed:

"A very good job if we hear no more about him. He was only drawing his salary, and doing no work."

"But," said Fitzgerald, who was rather bewildered—"but he owes me my salary. I never had anything since the magazine was started except £10."

"That's a pity," said the other, slowly. "I always heard he was fishy about money matters—and other matters too."

"I don't know what you mean," said Fitzgerald quickly. "Of course he'll pay me. I don't doubt that. But it's too bad of him to be so careless——"

"I expect he has spent all the money by this time. Wish I had known; I'd have told you not to have Hilton Clarke in your debt to the tune of twopence. It's a pity; I don't expect you'll ever see a farthing of it."

"You don't mean to say that you accuse him of stealing my salary?" said Fitzgerald. But his resentment against this implication was accompanied by a wild guess at what his own situation would be if it were true.

"Oh no, I don't say that," said the manager, regarding

him. 'I wouldn't call it that. He wouldn't look at it in that light. But you ought to know Hilton Clarke better than I do. I only know of him by report; and I know I wouldn't lend him a sovereign I couldn't afford to lose.'

Fitzgerald went back to his own room and sat down. It was not only the loss of the money—supposing this thing were true—that troubled him. He could replace that loss in time. But to think that this friend of his, who had seemed so kind and considerate, who had such delicate perceptions and sympathies in literary matters, could act like a common vulgar scoundrel, and that in a peculiarly callous fashion—this it was that crushed him. But only for a few seconds. He refused to believe such a thing. He was ashamed of himself for having deemed it possible. He went back to Mr. Silas Earp and told him that he need not mention to any one the fact of Hilton Clark's being pecuniarily indebted to him, Fitzgerald, for of course the matter would be put straight. The lugubrious manager regarded him as if with a little sad curiosity, and only said, "Very well."

The next few days were days of deep suspense to Fitzgerald, for he knew not what to think of this persistent silence. When the explanation came it was short and decisive. One morning he went into the office as usual. Mr. Silas Earp met him.

"The fat's in the fire now," said the manager calmly. "Mr. Scobell has been here this morning. A mad bull is a fool to him."

"What is the matter, then?"

"The story got all over London last night, he says. And the magazine is to be stopped this week. There is the announcement."

He handed the stupefied assistant editor a printed slip with these words underlined in writing: "We have to announce to our readers this week that the publication of the *Household Magazine* ceases with the present number."

"But what is it all about? What is the story?"

"Well, I only got bits, he was in such a rage," said the manager. "It's all about Lady Ipswich, I believe: and when her brother found her at last, at Geneva, with Hilton Clarke, she wouldn't come back, not a bit. She says Sir John can take out a divorce if he likes."

Fitzgerald was staggered but only for a moment.

"And even if the story is true," he cried, "what has

that to do with the magazine? Why stop the magazine on account of it? We never advised our readers to run away with other people's wives; it has nothing to do with the magazine."

"Oh, but Mr. Scobell wants to smash something or somebody," the manager said, calmly. "His wife is furious; Lady Ipswich was a friend of hers." And then there's money; Mr. Scobell thinks Hilton Clarke only started this magazine to get money out of him——"

"Oh, that's nonsense!" said Fitzgerald, warmly. "That is quite preposterous; Hilton Clark may be this or that, but he is not a deliberate swindler. He wouldn't take the trouble. He is too self-indulgent. And then if you go and stop the magazine now, you make an association between it and this scandal that doesn't exist. You draw attention to it. You ask people to believe——"

But at this moment Mr. Scobell himself made his appearance, and an angry man he was. It was in vain that Fitzgerald pointed out to him that to stop the magazine that very week would be the very thing to make the public believe there was some connection between it and what had happened. "Sassiety," Mr. Scobell declared, was talking of nothing but this scandal; and here was Hilton Clarke's name outside the periodical that he owned. A nice thing to have the editor of your own paper run away with the wife of one of your own friends, and lead everybody to believe that you had introduced them! He would have no more of this. He had lost enough money, without having to incur scandal as well. No doubt it was a fine thing for literary men to have a paper go on forever——"

"But what do you mean by that?" said Fitzgerald, with a sharpness that brought Mr. Scobell to his senses, "If you are tired of the magazine, and have no faith in it, drop it when you like. I was only anxious you should not associate it with a merely personal scandal. But you needn't talk as if it had been a fine thing for me. For all my work on it I have received £10; I should have made more at sweeping a crossing."

Mr. Scobell was bewildered; but when the circumstances were explained to him, he not only exempted Fitzgerald from the vague charge he had brought against literary persons generally, but said he had been infamously treated, and that as he might suffer from the sudden cessation of the magazine, some compensation was due to him.

"It was plunder—a deliberate scheme for plunder," he maintained. "And he has done you as he has done me. It isn't more than three weeks since he got an extra £100 from me. It was a deliberate swindle. He never cared about the magazine; he never worked for it; it was a scheme to get money——"

"It was nothing of the kind, Mr. Scobell," said Fitzgerald, bluntly "I know what he thought of the magazine; I talked enough with him about it. He expected it to be a great property, and that as he had presented you with the idea, he ought to have a liberal salary and not too much work. He is a self-indulgent man; he can deny himself nothing. If you and I have lost this money, you can afford to lose it better than I can; but there's no use in making wild charges. It was not a scheme to defraud; that is absurd. I think he was very soon disappointed; he didn't care to work after that. And then it was a pity the money should all have been placed in his hands; he always seemed to think he had a right to everything within his reach. And then I suppose this opportunity—this temptation—was too much for him, don't you see!"

"Well, you take it pretty quietly," said Scobell, almost with a touch of indignation, "seeing you must have lost £60 or £70 through him."

"It wasn't altogether that I was thinking of," said Fitzgerald. "I liked him."

Mr. Scobell adhered to his determination to stop the magazine; but he sent Fitzgerald a solatium in the shape of a check for £25. Thus it was that Fitzgerald found himself with about four or five months' pretty hard work thrown away, with much less money in his pocket than he had come to London with, and without that friend on whose occasional word of sympathy or advice he had counted. But he was not much dismayed, after all. Other people had come to London and fared worse. He saw lots of things he thought he could do—driving a hansom, if it came to that. If his literary adventures had so far been unsuccessful, he had all the more material in his desk for use when the opportunity arrived. He was free from debt, for he had taken instant care to repay John Ross; he could live on little; he had the hope and courage of three-and-twenty; and when he wanted relief from the cares and troubles of the world, he had the faculty of entirely losing himself in a play or a poem, so that it was of little

consequence to him whether the night was cold, or whether there was supper in his room or not. Besides, was he not the most fortunate of mortals in the possession of Kitty! How could a man be unhappy who had one true heart continually thinking of him, and cheering him with messages of trust and love and confidence?

“MY BRAVE BOY” (Kitty wrote, on hearing of the catastrophe),—“I’m very glad. It will open your eyes. It’s worth the money. Why, you’ll never get on at all if you believe in everybody like that; and if you don’t get on, what’s to become of me? I saw through that whited sepulchre of a wretch: if I had him here just now I’d let him know what I’ve been thinking of him. And even now you seem disposed to make excuses for him. Perhaps when one person takes money—and cruelly and meanly takes money—that belongs to another person, he isn’t called a thief *among gentlemen*. That wouldn’t be refined, perhaps? Now, dear Willie, once for all, it won’t do for you to go on like that. All your geese are swans (including me). You have too much poetry about you; and you are too willing to believe in people; and you were made too much of about Inisheen. If you keep all your poetry for me, and make me wonderful and glorious, that’s quite right, for that is just the sort of person I am; but you’ll have to give up painting fancy portraits of other people. I am younger than you; but I’ve seen a good lot. But do you think I want my bonny Coulin to be hard-hearted? No, I don’t. I want him to keep all his poetry and imagination for me; and not to believe in anybody else—further than he can see them; and then when he has made his way in the world, and fought people on their own terms, then he can settle down and let his children make a fool of him to their hearts content.

“Willie, there’s a man in Dublin bothering me with his bouquets again; but I don’t allow them to be sent up, even when he manages to get them left, and I haven’t even looked at his card. I go to Belfast on the 13th. My father can’t imagine why I don’t go to England; but must I not remain faithful to my boy’s wishes? Dear Willie, I have read the verses a hundred times over that you sent me with the bracelet on my birthday but why are they so sad? I like particularly that one that ends,—

O aching heart, that sinks or swells
When’er at night you hear the sound
So far away of Shandon bells!”

But are you so very lonely, then, and only making believe to be comfortable and happy when you write to me? Really, when I see the people who haven't an ounce or an atom of your genius driving past in their fine carriages, I have no patience. And they come to the concert and sit in the stalls with their diamonds and opera cloaks; and the young men so spick and span. Things are not right. What can *they* do? Can they do anything but drive in the Phoenix—the Phaynix I suppose they'd call it. Yes, and I wonder how long we may have to go on this way—everything unsettled, and a long distance between us. And now you have to begin all over again, thanks to your fine friend. But if you're not afraid, no more am I; and we'll snap our fingers at them yet; and when everything's quite fair and clear, and money all right, then you'll publish a whole volume of poems telling the country all about me and my wonderfulness (I am wonderful, I can tell you; when I think of the way I bear up against your being so far away from me, I am lost in admiration of myself). That reminds me that I have made a conundrum. This is it: *Why should my Coulin be the happiest man in England?* Now you may twist this about any way, and you may pull it to pieces, and put it together again, and turn it upside down and round about half a dozen times over, and yet you would never find out the answer. I say *you* wouldn't; anybody else in the world would see it in a moment. It's *Because I'm in love with him*. I think this is very good; keep it a secret.

“Your obliged and humble servant,

“KITTY.”

London did not feel quite so lonely that evening. There was to be an Irish-ballad concert in St. James's Hall at eight o'clock, and this letter had put him into such a cheerful frame of mind that he thought he would go away up there and get some cheap place; and then, sitting all by himself, and not being obliged to talk to any one, he would be able to hear if any of them could sing the Irish songs like Kitty,

CHAPTER XII.

A GO-BETWEEN.

Two days after the public announcement had been made that there was to be no more of the *Household Magazine*, Fitzgerald was sitting in that solitary room of his, alone. The morning was crisp and clear; there was a wintry feeling in the air; the sunlight falling into the little court yard was cheerful enough, even if the small plane-trees had lost their leaves. But it was not of the Fulham Road he was thinking, now that he had put away from him the sheet of paper on the table. This first touch of the winter had awakened dreams. Now the picture before his absent eyes was Kenvane Head; the blue sea all murmuring; the vast caves silent and mysterious; his only companion a sagacious, quick-eyed spaniel, lying with his nose between his paws, and yet evidently not understanding why his master should thus be content to sit and muse, instead of being up and after the wild fowl. Again it was a wild moorland on a bitter cold night; Andy the Hopper and he each cramped up in a barrel sunk into the bog; both breathlessly waiting for the sudden whirr overhead of the duck. Or rather was it not of that wonderful day when Miss Romaine first condescended to go out into the open light of the streets with him; his consciousness that all Cork was looking at and admiring her; the delight of recommending a particular seat on board the steamer; the sail past the golden autumn woods, and the broad shallows of the river, out into the great, shining, windy harbor, with its glancing waves, and white yachts, and islands; her admiration of a pretty bare-headed lass at Aghada, whose hair seemed to have been bleached by the sea air and the sunlight into different shades of golden brown, and Kitty's timid remark that she thought his hair was like that (followed by a quick blush, for their acquaintanceship at that time did not quite justify personal criticism); and then, finally, his faithful escort of her home in the evening, Miss Patience most happily being confined to her house with neuralgia. Or was it of that other day when, at a later period of their intimacy, he had inveigled

her away into a boat with him ; the Atlantic calm and blue ; Kitty getting her first lessons in rowing, and pulling away so bravely that by and by it was discovered that her poor little white hands had become quite rosy red inside ; then fishing off the deep shelving rocks ; her shriek of delight when she felt a tug ; her shriek of fear when he hauled in for her a grasping and flopping gurnard ; their luncheon on the beach, and the wonder of having Kitty wait on him and offer him things ; then the long row home, Kitty lying snugly in the stern, and chatting, or laughing, or singing, as the mood overtook her, the while the westering sun sank slowly toward the horizon, and the heavens became a blaze of green and gold and crimson fire, and the clear star of the lighthouse, high up there on the cliff, shone out to sea. On this wintry morning his thoughts and dreams were far away indeed from the Fulham Road.

There was a step on the stair outside.

"John Ross come back from Cookham," he thought.

But when, in answer to a sharp knock, he went and opened the door, it was not the Scotch artist, but Mr. Scobell, he found before him—Mr. Scobell, looking very smart indeed with his glazed boots, his dogskin gloves, and cane.

"How are you, Fitzgerald?" said he, and as he entered the big bare room he looked curiously around, for this was his first visit. "Hope you're not busy. Glad to find you at home. So this is your bunk, is it? Hum, you're not so well housed as Hilton Clarke was in the Albany. Perhaps that is because you live on your own money, and not on some one else's."

"I don't think there's any use in going back on that," said Fitzgerald, uneasily.

"Oh, you take it very easily—very easily. Quite right to stick up for your friend, though, if you look at it in that way. That's not quite how I see it."

He sat down, stretched out his legs, and tapped the tip of his boot with his cane.

"The fact is," said he, calmly, "I have been trying these last two or three days to find out how I came to be such a fool as to go into anything that Hilton Clarke proposed. But he is a devilish plausible fellow—devilish plausible. There's a sort of infernal superior air about him that imposes on people ; you can't imagine he'd swindle you——"

"I don't think we need talk about it, for we sha'n't agree about it," said Fitzgerald, bluntly.

"Well, he has made me dance to a pretty tune. Do you know how much he has got out of me altogether?"

"You appear to forget," said Fitzgerald, somewhat angrily, "that you went into that scheme entirely as a business matter. It looked promising enough. You had your eyes open. I suppose if it had been successful, if it had made money, and been socially a success, there would not have been any talk about swindling——"

"Very well, very well," said Mr. Scobell, good-naturedly, "we will not talk about it. I consider you have more right to complain than I have. But I did not come here to talk about Clarke. I came here to talk about you."

He glanced round the apartment; then at the small table, with its bottle of ink and big sheets of paper.

"I suppose, now," said he, with an abstracted, dreamy air, as if he was talking of something a long way off—"I suppose, now, it isn't very easy to get on in literature in London?"

"I find it difficult enough; in fact, I can't get on at all," said Fitzgerald; and then he added, with a kind of rueful smile: "However, I have not quite despaired yet. I am trying to find out whether it is my work that is bad, or whether it is that the newspapers and magazines are overmanned; or there is this possibility—that my work may not be so very bad, and yet just miss something that makes it practicable and suitable. Well, I hope to find out in time—and the sooner the better for me."

"Yes, no doubt," observed Mr. Scobell, again assuming that contemplative air. "You have applied to the *Times*, I suppose?"

"No; I imagine every one applies to the *Times*," Fitzgerald said. "And then there is a great drawback; I don't know shorthand——"

"You can learn——"

"I ought to have learned it long ago. It takes a terrible time, and constant practice, they say, before you are worth anything to a newspaper. I ought to have learned it while I had a fixed situation in Cork. That was my chance. Well, I lost my chance, partly, I suppose, because I had ambitions beyond newspaper-work, and partly because I could get too easily down to my native place, where there

was always a gun or a rod. Now I am paying the penalty; for the newspapers don't seem to want my fine literature, and I can't offer them good reporting."

"My dear fellow," said Mr. Scobell, regarding him with an air of the most magnificent patronage, "I am delighted to hear you talk so sensibly—delighted! You have common-sense. Sooner or later the public will listen to you. They will discover that you can recognize facts. But in the mean time," added this artful diplomatist, with somewhat greater caution—"in the mean time, you see, you must make the best of it——"

"No doubt——"

"But wait a moment. When I see you in such a reasonable and sensible way of thinking, I don't think I can do better than put before you a proposal—a suggestion—that was made to me yesterday by Mrs. Chetwynd. Now she is also a person of common-sense. She is practical, and she is also sympathetic. When she saw the announcement that our magazine had stopped, it occurred to her that you might have a little more time on your hands; and she sent for me at once."

"Yes?" said Fitzgerald; though he did not quite see what literary employment he could obtain from Mrs. Chetwynd.

"To make a long story short—for we had a considerable talk about you—the sum and substance of her suggestion is this: that, if you had time to spare from your general literary work, it might be worth your while to accept some additional occupation which, with no great trouble, might—ah—might, in fact, increase your income."

"I would gladly," said Fitzgerald, without hesitation. "But it sounds rather—rather vague, doesn't it?"

"Oh no. She had a distinct proposal. If you will read to her for an hour each day, she would give you a certain salary—small, you know, but then, an addition, as I suggested—in short, one hundred pounds a year."

"To read to her?" said Fitzgerald, with a sudden flush on his forehead. "Isn't that more like the occupation of a waiting-maid?"

"Oh no, certainly not," said Mr. Scobell, with an eagerness which showed that he had been looking forward to this objection. "Not at all, I assure you. That is just the mistake you make. What Mrs. Chetwynd must have, first of all, is an intelligent and cultivated reader, who knows

about politics and literature, and what's going on. Very good people go to her house—the best, indeed; and she wants to know what is going on. Very well; the poor old lady is nearly blind; she can't read; what more natural than that she should say to herself, 'Well, now, if I can find an intelligent young literary man who could spare me an hour or so, he could pick out just such things as are important, and I should have the advantage of his judgment in literary matters, and it might be some little help to him.' She is a very kindly and thoughtful old lady, let me tell you, Fitzgerald; and before rejecting her offer at once, you ought to think over it——”

“Oh, I am very much obliged to her, and to you also,” said Fitzgerald, who was obviously hesitating. “And any sort of settled income I should be glad to have. But—but if all this is needed, who has been reading to her hitherto”

“Why, she told you, don't you remember?” said Mr. Scobell, who perceived that he was likely to be successful in his commission. “Her niece. But then Miss Chetwynd's personal occupations seem to take up more and more of her time. You have no idea what that girl has on her hands. And so sharp she is—as sharp as a needle. By Jove, she caught me yesterday afternoon as clean as ever you saw! I said to her, 'Well, now, Miss Chetwynd, I hear a great deal of this Society of yours, and of what you are doing in the East End.' 'Oh yes,' she says, 'people talk of what a few of us are trying to do, and they think it heroic, and interesting, and all that, whereas it is quite prosaic and simple; but what they won't do is to bother themselves to give us the least help. Well, don't you know, Fitzgerald, this was rather a poser; so I said to her—there were some very distinguished people in the room, mind you—Professor——, and Professor——, and Canon——, and a lot more—and I said to her that I wasn't afraid to go down to Shoreditch, or Shadwell, or whatever the blessed place was, and lend a helping hand now and again. I have plenty of time; I have a little spare cash now and then; I thought it was natural enough. No; she wouldn't hear of it; I knew nothing about the people; indiscreet charity was the worst enemy they had; and so on. 'Well,' I said to her, like an ass as I was, 'you must be very confident, when you refuse help in that way.' 'Oh, but I don't,' she says, as sharp as a needle. 'If you really wish to help us, you can

do so ; you can buy us three hundred filters ; we are very badly in want of them.' Three hundred filters ! And then Professor — laughed, as if it was a great joke ; but I can tell you I wasn't going to be jumped upon by a jackass-headed old idiot like that, so I said, just as I might be talking to you, 'Of course you shall have them, Miss Chetwynd.' And now the mischief is, I haven't the slightest notion what they'll cost—five shillings, half a sovereign, a couple of guineas——"

"Oh, they are not so dear as that," said Fitzgerald. "That one over there is a very good little filter, and it only cost me half a crown."

"Half a crown. Thirty-seven pounds ten." Well, if it had been a hundred and thirty-seven pounds ten, I declare I'd have paid it to take the wind out of the sails of that lantern-jawed old Behemoth. But about this matter of the reading, Fitzgerald. I did not undertake that you would accept ; but I said I would try to persuade you. A hundred a year isn't much——"

"It is a great deal to me," said Fitzgerald, frankly.

"Very well. What is an hour's time a day ? And there's more than that. The very best people in London go to that house. A young man ought to see sassiety. I think it is a great chance——"

"Oh, but I can't go at all if I am to see any one !" exclaimed Fitzgerald, in great dismay. "I did not understand that at all——"

"Of course you won't see them while you're there on duty—of course not. But surely you understand. This old lady is interested in you. She is a country-woman of yours. Something in your manner, or accent, or something in your writing, reminds her of her nephew, who was just the whole world to her. And of course you will be recognized as a friendly visitor, not as a slave. You may meet people ; it is a great chance for you. It is one of the very best houses in London ; and it is not exclusive—cabinet ministers, men of science, poets, painters, all sorts, as well as the best-known members of the fashionable world. There is no house in London more highly spoken of. My dear fellow, you must be mad if you think twice.

"Well, I won't think twice."

"That's right. And I said if you accepted you would call on her this evening at six ; all the visitors will have gone by that time."

Accordingly, that evening Fitzgerald called at the house in Hyde Park Gardens, and was immediately admitted and shown up to the drawing-room. Instead, however, of finding Mrs. Chetwynd there, he found her niece, who was seated at a table apparently engaged in painting, and who rose as he entered. He was disturbed and vexed, he knew not why. He did not like meeting those clear and penetrating eyes, though indeed they were pretty eyes, and had some touch of friendliness in them as she spoke to him, and said she would go and fetch her aunt. It seemed to him that he was taking over a woman's work. While she herself was addressing herself to the harder outside realities of the world. That was not a pleasant thought—especially if it had also occurred to her. He was somewhat relieved when the tall clear-eyed young lady, whose natural grace of manner somewhat softened the serious simplicity and dignity of her face and figure, left the room. Nay, he rejoiced to think that he had caught her painting. That was something pretty and feminine. As there was a complete silence outside the door, he ventured to approach the table where she had been seated, to get a glimpse of her work. And then he found that instead of coloring Christmas cards, or finishing up a little bit of imaginary landscape, she had been engaged in copying on to a magic-lantern slide, from the scientific book lying open there, the appearance of a magnified drop of impure water, with the most ghastly creatures squirming about within the charmed circle. He had just time to retreat a step or two, when aunt and niece entered.

The little old lady received him in the most gracious way, and begged him to be seated, while her niece was making her comfortable in an easy chair by the fire. That accomplished, Miss Chetwynd took up her painting materials and disappeared.

“I hope I have not disturbed your niece,” said Fitzgerald, anxiously, “by calling at this hour.”

“Oh dear no!” the old lady said, warming her mitted hands at the fire. “Oh dear no. I dare say she is off to her magic lantern now. She means to frighten some of her poor people into using filters; and your friend Mr. Scobell, by the way, is going to get her the filters. She is a very good girl, is Mary; and very industrious; I only hope she won't catch some dreadful fever in those places. But don't talk to her, Mr. Fitzgerald, if you please, about

her work. She says there is too much talk. Oh, by the way, perhaps I am going too fast in assuming that you are going to take pity on a poor old blind woman, and let her know what's going on?"

"If I can," said he, "but I scarcely know——"

"Oh, but you shall have absolute liberty," she said, blithely. "You shall order any books or newspapers that you like yourself; and I am looking forward to such a treat; for I have had to live so long on the dry bones of science! You know, Mr. Fitzgerald, Mary is the best of girls; but she can't help thinking that I am interested in what interests her; and really, as you said so cleverly the other day, one gets weary of the frog's foot, and would prefer a little human nature. And Mary laughs at me for a silly old woman when I have listened most patiently to her Post-Office Savings-banks scheme, and her plan for ventilating sick-rooms, and all about her hospital nurses, and when I say to her, 'Mary dear, just to go in to dinner with a pleasanter taste in the mouth, won't you read me a chapter of *Consuelo*? And really it is wonderful what that girl gets through in a day; learning herself and teaching other people; and afraid of no amount of trouble or disappointment. Oh yes, and I can see that her reading is not thrown away; for sometimes, when the scientifics, as I call them, are here, though she does not say much, you can hear that she has just hit the point in dispute; and they are all very kind to her, I'm sure. Now, Mr. Fitzgerald, I am so glad that this has been arranged; and I hope we shall try to make it not very irksome to you. What hour would suit you best?"

"But that is for you, Mrs. Chetwynd, to say," answered the young man. "Any hour, indeed, would suit me; for I have no definite occupation at the moment, since the *Household Magazine* was stopped."

"A quarter to six in the evening would suit me very well, then," said the old lady. "For at this time of the year we keep open table—a quarter to seven *table d'hote* in fact, without any ceremony, and anybody who likes can drop in, and then be off to their lectures and what not. That is very useful for Mary; she sees everybody; and has not got to sacrifice the whole evening. Well, you see, Mr. Fitzgerald, if you could make it convenient to call at a quarter to six, and spend an hour with the newspapers or new books, I should go in to meet my friends quite

coached up, and then I shouldn't have to ask them whether Queen Anne was dead or not. And I know you'll have pity on me, Mr. Fitzgerald, and not choose books that are too dreadfully learned. We will leave the bismuth in the moon alone, even if you have to read me the broken-hearted poems in the provincial newspapers."

And so, with a very pretty little laugh, and an appointment for the very next evening, this interview was concluded; and Fitzgerald, as he walked away down through the gaslit streets to Fulham, was thinking that this time there could be no mistake, that this time he could definitely assure Kitty that he was in possession of a settled income, however small. And there were other things that occurred to him. He could not help regarding it as one of the oddest possible results of the conditions of modern society that he, a man, should have been constituted, as it were, the champion of sentiment as against science, and that his antagonist, the champion of science, should prove to be a young lady of very considerable personal attractions. The situation seemed to him novel; and he kept wondering what Mary Chetwynd thought of it, if, indeed, she had time to think of such trivial things at all.

CHAPTER XIII.

NEIGHBORS.

To be a man of letters in London—how many young people, in remote corners of the country, are at this present moment thinking that there can be nothing finer than that, and perhaps secretly wondering whether they might not risk the venture and try to make such a career their own! When Fitzgerald resolved to quit the security of that provincial newspaper office and try his fortune in the great capital, he was fairly equipped for the enterprise. His education, if not extensive, had been thorough as far as it went; he was well read; he had taken immense pains in mastering a certain simplicity of style; he was familiar with many subjects and ways of life that the ordinary writer, mostly a dweller in towns, knows very little about;

he had youth, health, and a frank face; and his heart was fired with love, which was likely to add a little touch of poetical glamour to his productions. But his experiences fell far short of his buoyant anticipations. His ignorance of shorthand barred the familiar gateway of the newspapers. Then he found that those magazines which were the most ready to accept his contributions were the least prompt in paying for them. Moreover, he had sadly to confess to himself that those contributions which he could get accepted were not literature at all. They were mere manufacture—compilations in the British Museum. At first he had aimed at something higher. Disregarding Hilton Clarke's disparagement of criticism, he had made some careful studies of one or two of the pre-Shakspearean dramatists: no editor would look at them. Then he tried essays on social and domestic subjects; but every avenue seemed to be blocked. Occasionally he had the satisfaction of finding a bit of translation from Catullus or Horace accepted; though he rightly judged that magazine editors looked on such things as handy for filling up half a page. No, there was no help for it; he might cultivate the higher literature for his own satisfaction, but if he wanted to supplement that one hundred pounds a year he was now in receipt of, and so be able to write hopeful letters to Kitty, what he had to sit down and compose was a useful little paper on "The Successive Discoveries of Kaolin," or "The origin of the English Race-Horse," or some such practical subject. It was not literature; but it brought Kitty a little nearer.

John Ross was doing him a mischief. It was all very well for the Scotch artist to take this young companion of his about with him, and give him a new pair of eyes, and color up the world for him; but unconsciously to himself Fitzgerald was adopting in his own work Ross's way of looking at things. Ross was purely and simply an impressionist; a vivid suggestion was what he aimed at, careless of subsequent detail or even precise accuracy of form. And it was so delightful to Fitzgerald to walk abroad with this man, and see the commonest things in the world intensified with a new interest, that he insensibly yielded to the fascination, and forgot that he was a writer and not a painter. The objects of life became to him so many pieces of color; when he looked at a long terrace of buildings shining clear on a summer's day, it was not to guess at the rent of the houses, or wonder whether they were well drained, or

whether there were any sick people there unable to come out into the sunlight, but to observe that the warm brilliant mass of yellow made the blue above more intense. If the life of a man of letters in London, so far as he had experience of it, was disappointing and prosaic, these occasional walks with his artist companion brought back some poetry into the world. "Io anche son pittore," he might have said, so wonderfully did his faculty of observation develop under this rough-and-ready, quarrelsome, enthusiastic tutelage; but he was much too wise to attempt anything with the brush.

"Man," said John Ross to him one day, as they were walking out in the suburbs, "what a grand thing it must be to be like you!"

"Oh, indeed," said Master Willie, whose fortunes did not seem to himself to be so flourishing.

"Ay, just to be able to look at the things that nature puts before ye, and never to have a thocht o' how ye're going to make money out o' them. What wouldna I give to be a laddie again, just for an hour, and lie down on a warm bank in the sun, and watch the clear waters of the burnie twirlin' round the stanes, and the speedwells on the banks, and the red rowans on the trees, and everything like that, and just to let your eyes drink it in without even thinking of the infernal pent-box? Man, it's a terrible thing to have to go through the world just contenually warslin' wi' tubes o' colors. There's no two things that I see thegither that I hav'na to take the balance of; it's a disease—confound it! it's a disease. I'm a man: why shouldna I be allowed to go through the world and look at it like another man? It's a pent-box that's the millstone round my neck. Why should I care about they palings?" he said, as they were passing a cabbage garden. "I'm not going to pent them! What is it to me what color they are!"

"Well, that can't bother you anyway," says Fitzgerald, with a laugh, "for they haven't any color."

"Dinna be so sure about that, laddie," said the other, "Ye think they're gray, I suppose?"

"Well, aren't they?"

"Oh, ay. No doubt, if ye took a bit o' the wood in your hand, ye would find it gray and colorless enough. But just you try to fix your eyes on the wooden palings, and on

the violent greens o' the cabbages at the same time. Is the wood quite so gray?"

"No," Fitzgerald had to admit. "Not quite so gray. In fact, rather lilac, isn't it? In fact, it is quite a pinkish-lilac, if you look at the two together."

"Ay, and that's what ye've got to pent, my laddie. But if people 'll no buy my pictures of Cookham, they're no likely to buy a picture of a cabbage garden in Chelsea."

"But, after all," Ross, said his companion, "writing people are just as badly off as painting people, for they have to keep watching and watching——"

"But they hav'na to warsle wi' the pigments, man," the other said, impatiently. "When ye see a thing is yellow, ye say it's yellow, and there's an end; but the penter has got to get that particular quality out o' an infernal tin tube, and even then put it into all sorts o' relations with the things round it. I wish to Heaven I had been brought up a penter o' shop doors and shutters, and I could have had my own way wi' fine color, and naething stepping in to spoil it."

"It's all nonsense your complaining like that," Fitzgerald said, finally. "Instead of complaining, you ought to be thankful. The difference between you and other people is that you have trained yourself to see more. You see beautiful things at every turn, where they see nothing. Is there any advantage in being partially blind?"

Had John Ross kept more closely to his studio in the Fulham Road, no doubt Fitzgerald's life at this time would have been a pleasanter one. But he was much away; especially when he had got a few pounds for a sketch; and his neighbor, up there in a solitary room, felt the winter nights to be long and dark. The hour spent in reading and talking to Mrs. Chetwynd was the bright spot of the day; when he returned to his lonely lodgings and this almost hopeless manufacture of articles in which he took nothing but the most perfunctory interest, sometimes the world seemed to weigh heavily on him. But, curiously enough, it was always at such moments, when circumstances seemed to hem him in, when the battle of life appeared to be going against him, when the future seemed growing dark indeed, that his imagination broke through these toils and carried him into a sphere of creation where his work was a joy to him. No matter how

insignificant the result might be ; it was the expression of something within him that he himself could not well understand ; it was not of the slightest consequence to him what editors might think of it. One night, for example, he was laboring away at an article on "Some Particulars of the Earthquake at Lisbon." He had been for two days at the British Museum ; and he had copious notes before him. He was trying to make the picture as graphic as he could ; but it was distressing work ; and he did not even know where to send it when he had it finished. Suddenly he heard a slight hissing sound in the fire—like that produced by rain falling down the short chimney. But he could hear no sound of rain on the slates. He went to the window ; there was an absolute silence ; but there were dark streaks crossing the orange glow of the lamp in the courtyard. He opened the window and put out his hand : it was stung by the sharp, moist touch of snow. And then what must he needs do but hastily put on his cap and issue out into the dark to feel this soft thing blowing all about him—touching his lips, his eyelashes, his hands—this soft, silent thing that made a wonder of the lonely streets. He wandered on and on in a sort of ecstasy ; voices seemed calling to him from the past ; he knew not whether to laugh or to cry. His blood tingled with joy at the presence of this new strange thing ; and yet there was a kind of despair, as if he yearned for some one far away ; and there was a doom portending ; an agony of love and terror and appeal. Then a phrase here or there ; and it was a lover who spoke ; and the voice of the sea could be heard now in the awful caves. Quite blindly, like one in a dream, and not heeding the snow, he made his way back from the dark lanes to his room, and almost mechanically he sat down to his writing-table. He saw something before him not the least like what he had seen outside. It was more like the sea, and darkness, and the wild Irish coast. And with an impatient cast here and there for a rhyme, and all trembling, and even scarcely knowing the value of the phrases he was using, he put down on paper what seemed to him the voice of some one else, that he could hear far off in the night :—

"The wild March winds are blowing ;"
The trees are dark ; the skies are gray ;
O love, let us be going—
The evening gathers : far the way.

“ Oh, do you hear the thunder
 On Daramona's rocky isle—
 The wild seas sweeping under
 The ghostly cliffs of black Glengyle ? ”

He rose, with a quick kind of sigh, pushed the paper away, and began mechanically to knock the snow from his sleeves and his coat. Then he went to the fire, and lit a pipe, and stared into the red coals as if he expected to see more pictures there. And then, after a time, he went back to the table, and took up the bit of paper, and calmly and critically regarded what he had written.

“ Yes,” he said to himself. “ That's it. That's true. I will keep that for myself. There isn't an editor in London would give me twopence for it anyway; and the public would ask where the story was; but it has got to stand just as it is; it is a bit of my personal property for Kitty to inherit when she becomes a widow.”

Just as he was putting away the bit of paper into the desk, which contained a very considerable quantity of similarly useless scraps, a noise was heard below; and Fitzgerald's heart jumped up at the notion that perhaps John Ross had come back from Sonning, where he had been for a fortnight. There was a ready means of ascertaining. He took the poker and knocked twice on the floor. In response there were three knocks on the roof of the studio. Then Fitzgerald made his way down the slippery steps, and caught Ross as he was in the act of lighting his stove.

“ No, no; let that alone,” he cried. “ I've got a blazing fire in my bunk. Come along up. Man, I've got some sheep's tongues that 'll make your mouth water, and a yard of French bread; only, you must bring some whiskey with you. Come along; I want to hear all about Sonning, and I won't ask you to show me your sketches.”

“ Ye're in a cheerfu' frame of mind, laddie,” said Ross, looking up. “ Have ye been drinkin' ? ”

“ No; what's worse, I've been neither eating nor drinking, and I'm desperately hungry.”

“ And so am I. Have ye got any tobacco ? ”

“ Plenty.”

“ Wait a minute, then.”

He went and got a cloth and dusted the snow off the packages he had brought in; and then he followed Fitzgerald up the staircase, and was soon engaged in helping

him to lay the cloth of the supper table and open the bottles, and what not.

“But I want to ken what has put ye in such fine fettle, man,” he said at length, regarding his companion from across the table. “Some young lass in Ireland, I suppose, has been sending ye a true-love knot. Poor thing! a lassie should never let her sweetheart get so far away as this; it’s no safe.”

“It isn’t that, though. I’ve written something I am pleased with; something I am going to keep for myself,” said Fitzgerald, frankly.

“Let us see it, then.”

“Oh no. It wouldn’t please any one else, I know.”

“Then what is the use of it?”

“None.”

“And ye are going on amusing yourself with capers instead of getting money and furnishing a house for the lass. Is that what ye mean?” said the other, severely.

“What lass? What are you talking about?”

“I have my suspicions, my lad. But let’s see what this is.”

“Oh, very well,” said Fitzgerald, at once going and fetching the sheet of scrawled paper.

John Ross bent his brows, and proceeded to read the verses line by line, which was an exquisite piece of torture for the writer of them.

“Where is Daramona?” said he, abruptly.

“I don’t know.”

When he had finished, he looked at it carefully again, and said, in rather a peevish sort of way “Well, but have ye nothing more to tell us?”

“No.”

“It’s a ghastly picture enough; oh, ay, I admit that; but—but what is it about?”

“I told you you wouldn’t be pleased with it,” said Fitzgerald, without any resentment.

“Ye might make some story——

“Oh yes, I know quite well. I know what an editor would want. There would have to be a third verse, with two dead bodies washed up by the sea somewhere; or some definite thing like that. Well, I am going to keep it as it is—of no use to any one but the owner.”

John Ross was not satisfied. He looked at the verses again, and then grumbled:—

"It's a good suggestion—it's a capital suggestion. But why dinna ye follow it out?"

"Some people," said Master Willie, slyly; "might hint that about some of your sketches; and yet you won't alter them."

"God bless me!" cried the other, staring at him. "Has the laddie gone daft? Writin' is not pentin', man! Do ye think the public are going to take the trouble to make a story for themselves?"

"I don't mean to ask them," said Fitzgerald, simply. "That is only a little bit for my own private satisfaction. Won't you allow me as much as that? I don't find that eager competition among editors and publishers for my work that I should like. I think the world could get on without literary people—especially literary beginners."

But he himself seemed to detect some kind of false note in this—some echo of what Hilton Clarke might have said. So he added, frankly:—

"No, I'm not going to give in yet. And I have got hold of a subject that I think might do."

"What is't?" said his companion, filling his pipe. "No too big, I hope. Something practical?"

"Well, you know, when you were up the Thames, my suppers here were a little bit lonely," Fitzgerald proceeded to say, as he also drew in a chair to the fire. "And I discovered that you could get a plate of cold meat, or a bit of fowl, and a glass of ale, at the Green Man, for sixpence. That again entitled you to go into the parlor and have a smoke. I went in, and made a discovery. There are cronies who come there every evening and discuss the affairs of the nation. My goodness! I have heard extraordinary statements made in the smoking-rooms of inns, but never anything quite so fine. And of course, as a stranger, I had to sit quiet and listen; but what I was thinking was that there must be a large population in this country who get their ideas and information from sources that the governing classes don't know anything about. What are they, then? Not the ordinary daily papers, for I read them. And this isn't the only bar-parlor or smoking-room I've been in; and it seemed to me that a series of articles on public-house politics might really be of use. These men have votes."

"Ay, the sources of their information, did ye say?" said Ross, grimly. "Their own heads, maybe."

“But then,” urged Fitzgerald, “when you hear a man make the absurdest statement—about the Prime Minister having written so-and-so to the Pope—and when he declares he saw the letter in print, and when everybody accepts the statement, you begin to ask how such stories can gain currency——”

“The impudence o’ the one man, and the ignorance o’ the ithers, I should think,” said Ross.

“No; for these things are talked of as matters of common knowledge; and yet the ordinary organs of public opinion know nothing of them—indeed, they are quite preposterous. You know, my father keeps an inn. I did not go much into the smoking-room; but I heard things from time to time; and you would’t believe the stories that are commonly accepted about the royal family, the members of the government, the House of Lords, and so on——”

“You’re right there,” Ross said. “I would *not* believe them.”

“The old gentlemen who meet at the Green Man are very loyal at all events,” Fitzgerald continued. “Will you come round to-morrow night and listen to them? Oh no; you’d better not; they don’t talk over respectfully about Scotchmen.”

“I’ll come round wi’ ye, laddie, if ye like; but what I want to know is how ye’re yoin’ to get any bread and butter out o’ writing down the idiocy of a lot of bemuddled auld beer-drinkers.”

“But they have votes,” continued Fitzgerald. “And there are thousands and thousands of them throughout the country; and their opinions spread; and surely it is of importance to know what they are saying. If it is absurd, if it is ludicrous, so much the better for me. I don’t see why a solemn discussion on the only fit and proper way to govern Frenchmen, by these profound students of history, should not be made amusing enough.”

“Oh, that’s it, is it? Ye go and get admitted into a brotherhood o’ philosophers, and ye watch and wait, and then when they are warmed into friendship and confidence wi’ their pipes and their ale, and when their poor wandering old wits begin to dance and stagger ’about a bit, then ye begin your thumb-nail sketches—you, sittin’ in the corner. Why, man, it’s like making a fool o’ your fayther.”

“I think it’s a very good thing,” said Fitzgerald, with a

laugh, "that the one-half of the world should know what the other half are saying."

"Get away wi' ye!" said Ross, resentfully. "Do ye mean to tell me ye will give a fair and honest report? Do ye mean to tell me there will be anything but jibs and jeers and gross misrepresentations? And you, a laddie just out of school, to make fun o' men o' mature years, who have pondered over the course of the world's way; and learned the lessons of life from A, B, C, to X, Y, Z! That is a nice work to undertake! Father of families, with the work o' the day over, and maybe glad to get away for an hour from a scolding wife, and doing their best for their country in talking over public affairs, and enjoying a quiet glass in warmth and security—and to have this Mephistopheles there wi' his note-book——"

"If you were to come with me for a night or two," said Fitzgerald, "you might make a few sketches. There are some splendid heads—of the regular old John Bull type, with a churchwarden added. Then we could make a book of the reprinted articles, with your sketches of the people."

His companion glanced at him.

"Your brain is quick, laddie, for new projects."

"But that's what they come to," said Master Willie, indicating, somewhat sadly, his open desk. "They are all nicely tied up there, in wrappers, and addressed to myself."

"There's a mine o' wealth in that desk, man," said Ross, sharply. "When I am an Academeeecian, and you are the editor of a daily newspaper, we'll both find out the value o' they sketches, in that desk there, and in my studio below. Have I no told ye that already until I'm tired? Ye are in too great a hurry, man. Some day ye'll be glad enough to get hold o' these ideas that ye are flinging about the now."

"Some day?" echoed Fitzgerald. "But in the mean time?"

"In the mean time," said he, rising and putting on his big cloak and his cap, "I'm going down below to my bed. And in the mean time begin your Teniers sketches, and good luck to ye; and dinna fash yourself about what's before ye, so long as ye've meat, drink, and clothes; and if there's a young lass in the case, as I jalouse, tell her no to drive any man's cattle, but to wait and give the world it's ain time to turn. Good-night, laddie," he said, as he opened the door and looked out. "I'm glad there's no moor to cross on a night like this."

CHAPTER XIV.

TWO LETTERS.

“TO MY TRUSTY AND WELL-BELOVED COULIN, THESE, —It is quite true, my dear Willie, that my letters to you have been very short lately; but you have no idea how I have been bothered and worried in coming to terms about that other tour in the South, and then I have had to try and pacify papa. He has taken it into his head that he ought to know more about you, and our ‘prospects.’ Isn’t that a horrid word? It is like ‘matrimony,’ or ‘nuptial settlements,’ or something in a lawyer’s office. I tell him that we are not going to do anything rash; that I for one am quite content to be as I am; and when he writes long letters about the importance of being settled in life, and the possibility of his not being long in the world, what can I do but gently remind him that I have earned my own living for a good many years, and have no great fear of being unable to do so? Poor dear papa, he is very kind, but he worries dreadfully. And really I don’t know what to say to him. If you were still the sub-editor of that poor defunct magazine, that would be something definite. Shall I tell him you are private secretary to a great lady? Of course I too wish you had something more settled; but do not imagine, dear Willie, that I am grumbling; for, after all, are we not just as well off in every respect as we were before we ever saw each other, and why should we not be quite content with things as they are? I hate writing like this. It is like drawing out a marriage contract. If you were here just for two minutes—I can imagine your coming in at the door over there, and looking round to see that Miss Patience was not in the room—we should understand each other at once. And if you were at the open door now, do you think I would be long at this table? Don’t you think I might meet you half-way, even if the ink-bottle were to be sent spinning across the floor? And you to talk of the coldness of my letters!

“Beside all that worry I have been hard at work with Professor—; and fancy the difficulty of doing that by

correspondence! He sets me the most terrible tasks; and as it is all science and no sound, it is not very lively. But really when you look at some of the songs that are most popular now in drawing-rooms—the air some common phrase, or perhaps borrowed, and of course changing to minor in the second part, and the accompaniment a few simple chords, only fit for children's practising—it seems possible for one to do something a little better. And then shouldn't I like to be able to set one of your songs to music—I mean something like proper music; I think I should not grumble over studying the counterpoint of *that* accompaniment. Do you think I would charge my Coulin a heavy royalty for singing *that* song? There, now: why don't you gentlemen of the press set to work and crush that royalty system? It is most mischievous; and the very best singers are giving in to it now, and of course the greater stupid the composer is the more eager is he to make the royalty on the sales big. Then the public are stupid, and don't remember that a good singer *can make even the singing of scales pathetic*; and any kind of song sounds as if it were fine if a good singer takes trouble with it. But you are not interested. I can see you are very nearly throwing my poor letter in the fire. But supposing that I put it this way, that A (this sounds like the professor, but I'm not going to teach *you* harmony), who can sing a little, marries B, who is very fond of singing and music generally. Then they grow older; or A's voice gives out: is there to be no more music? On the contrary, A having been a good little girl, and having devoted a fearful amount of time to the study of music and to practising, can still play B to sleep after dinner. More than that, if they get into trouble, can she not give music lessons? I believe this is a clear case of Q. E. D.. is it not, Master Willie?

“But everything in this letter is pure nonsense, and not to be heeded, except the tremendous fact that in ten days *I shall be in Cork again!* think of it!—the very same rooms too; and the same old piano; and the same little iron gate outside, which used to give such a queer rusty growl and squeak as a sort of friendly good-night to Master Willie, and a hint to come early the next morning, if there were any bluebells and champions to be looked for out in the woods. Alas! there will be no bluebells or anything else now—mud, I suppose; and I shall sit at the rainy window, and not stir out until it is time to go away down into the smoky town. There

will be nobody there now to make all the place wild and romantic; and to stuff people's heads full of dreams; and to make a poor girl think she never saw anything so lovely as a street in Cork when it was pouring wet—and the rain from the umbrella all the time running down her left shoulder and arm, because her companion was so careless. And there won't be anybody to say nice things about her in the *Cork Chronicle*; or to walk home with her up the steep hill; or to stop and talk just for a minute or a half-hour or so at the little gate. And what is Inisheen like now?—I suppose the sea dashing all over the shore; the villas shut up; the town a puddle. Sure 'tis not to Inisheen that I'm going. The only comfort would be that the ghosts and pixies of the neighborhood would have gone. What do the fairies do when it is wet? It must be most uncomfortable up in that glen, with all the branches dripping, and no leaves on the trees, and everything damp and cold and miserable. I never heard of fairies in winter.

“But about Inisheen, dear Willie, seriously. I wish you would let me know a little more clearly about that promise you made me give you. I have heard that in Scotland if two people only say before other people that they are man and wife, that is enough, and they are married. I have never been to Scotland, and I don't know; but I should think people might be too quick and then repent. I want to know if the promise we made that night (wasn't it a beautiful night, too?) is anything more than a promise. I have been wondering whether it might be the way young people used to get married when their parents were against it, or the priests perhaps. Situated as we are, sometimes I think it was scarcely wise to bind ourselves like that; and then again I say, 'Bother these doubts and troubles; it's all because Professor ——'s conundrums are too difficult.' And I am not going to bother you with them, dear Willie; for you must have enough to think of; and I meant this to be the longest and kindest letter ever written, after what you said about my not caring. I do care. You have no right to say that I don't—and if you were here I would prove it, even to your satisfaction. There, now! So don't say another word about not caring; but write me a long, nice, pleasant letter, professing yourself quite contented with everything that Providence and I have done for you, and telling me all the news of what you are doing, and how you occupy your time, and whether you ever think

of poor banished me. You are very ungrateful ; you have not the slightest notion of how good I am to you—to be sitting up writing to you like this, when every sensible creature in Belfast is in bed. The fire has gone out ; and the room is dreadfully cold ; yet here am I writing away with stiff fingers, and the difficulty is to know how to stop. For *I do want you to believe* that I did not mean my letters to be cold. I think it was the weather that got into them ; and if you wait till a thaw comes, and read them over again, you will find them quite different. This is all at present from your loving

KITTY.

“ P.S.—Miss Patience is very kind to me just now. She wrote a letter (which she showed me) to the *Northern Whig* here, the other day, about the numbers of beggars in the streets ; and, as sure as ever was, the very next morning there was an article in the newspaper beginning : ‘ From the number of letters which we receive complaining of the prevalence of mendicity in this town,’ etc. Oh, my ! At first she was so lofty she would scarcely speak to me, for she considers me a frivolous kind of creature, but afterward she grew more gracious, and has been quite compassionately kind to me ever since. Last night she made me wear her gloves on the way home, for I had forgotten mine, and it *was* cold. She even said that your verses in *Chambers’s Journal*, which I showed her, were written with much taste, though she added that she thought this was scarcely a time for writing poetry, considering the serious state of public affairs. Never mind, Willie, there is one person at least who knows better than that ; and you need not be afraid that *she* does not appreciate your poetry, as the world will some day.

“ Good-night, good-night.

K.”

Many and many a time did Master Willie read over this letter, wondering to which to attach the more importance—the obvious outward cheerfulness, or the curious half-suggested little admissions of trouble and doubt. He was so anxious that Kitty should not be anxious ! And it was hard on Kitty to be away in those towns, practically alone—for that fool of a creature who was supposed to be her companion apparently lived only for the pestering of editors—and not hearing very definite news of her lover’s success. The space that separated them seemed great enough ;

but it was the thought of the time that might separate them that he was afraid would weigh on Kitty's spirits. And so, in answering her, he resolved to take no notice of these involuntary backslidings of hers, but to assume that she still had the hope and high courage that possessed her when he and she parted at Inisheen.

MY DARLING KITTY," he wrote,—“You are all wrong about Inisheen. It is far more beautiful now than in the summer; this is the time it is worth living in—not when idle and fashionable young ladies come down to the little villas and show off their finery along the sands, neglecting their music, and becoming impertinent to their companions. You should see the real Inisheen when the frosty sun shines red through the thin fog; and you get a touch of the red on the shallow waters of the harbor; and the heavy craft are lying high and dry on the yellow mud. Just now, my dear Kitty, you would find the sun setting behind the sea, not away up behind the land, and the cliffs looking splendid. Then at night—think of the moon on the frost-hardened moor, with the ice ponds quite silvery here and there; that is the time for the duck, I can tell you. You think the people are depressed now? Why, this is the sociable time of the year; when you come home stiff with cold to a blazing fire and a warm room; and then you get your dinner over, and people come in, and you have the whiskey put on the table (that's for you, Miss Kitty, not for me), and the kettle steaming on the fire, and then the jokes and stories begin. Then you want to know where the fairies go to in the winter? I can tell you all about that. Mind you, the glen you speak of is quite lovely just now, with red berries and dark green bramble stems and lots of color you don't find at all in the monotonous summer green; but that does not matter; for I confess that the fairies at this time do spend the most of their time feasting and singing and dancing in the great halls within the mountains, though they have scouts sent out from time to time to see what is going on. There was a great banquet given by Don Fierna on the night of Tuesday last in the hall that comes nearest to the hillside above the well that you know. It was a very splendid affair; the vast cavern was all lit up by millions of glowworms placed along the rocks: but besides that there were innumerable will-o'-the-wisps moving through the air, so that you could see all the

colors of the various costumes quite well, although most of the light fell on the long banquet board, and that, again, lit up the smiling faces of the ladies and their knights. At the head of the long table Don Fierna sat in state; a terrible, huge person nearly two feet in height, with a prodigious black mustache and heavy eyebrows; he wore a Spanish hat of black velvet, a scarlet cloak, and on his breast hung his thick gold chain of office, all glittering with precious stones. On his right sat the boy-king of the fairies (who is his heir-apparent), but he was a very beautiful little king, with large blue eyes and golden hair, and he wore a cloak of purple velvet clasped at the neck with gold, and also a crown of pure gold starred with sapphires. Opposite him—that is, on Don Fierna's left—sat the boy-king's bride; she was more like a fairy than any of them, she was so slight and fair and delicate; and she wore a cloak of cream-white velvet, which had a scarlet flower where that was clasped, and her crown was not of gold, but of pure silver, with scarlet berries set into it. The other knights and ladies were in all sorts of different costumes and colors; and so were the servitors, who were hurrying this way and that with the materials of the feast. Oh, did I tell you that in the distance you could hear nightingales. For this is where the nightingales retire to in the winter; but they would be too noisy; so they are shut up in an adjoining cave, and you can only hear their singing like a sort of continuous water fall. Well you know, Kitty, I need not tell you all the things they had at the banquet; for the *menu* was rather long; only this, that the wine they drank was made of the honey that you get in the heads of pink clover, and that whereas the lords and the ladies drank out of acorn cups, Don Fierna's flagon consisted of the shell of a plover's egg set in a handle of bog-oak. Well, when they had got down to the end of the list, Don Fierna rose; and the moment they saw him rise, each lord and lady struck a small silver gong in front of them, so that instantly there was a sort of soft tinkling music rising from the whole table and filling the cave; and this immediately rushed the servitors to silence.

“Your Majesties, my noble lords and gracious ladies,” said Don Fierna, “before we proceed to the dance, I have a question to ask. What is the name of the mortal who was last at the Well of Vows?”

“All the eyes of the assemblage were now turned to the

lower end of the cavern, where, near the immense gate, and half hidden in the dusk, was a rather tall, soldier-looking fairy, dressed entirely in blue, with a blue feather in his cap, and a long silver sword by his side.

“‘Catherine, my liege,’ he said. (It’s a curious fact, Kitty, but the fairies always call mortals by their Christian names. I don’t know why it is; perhaps it is in imitation of the Church; or perhaps they found that human beings were always changing their surname.)

“‘Say, where is this Catherine?’ Don Fierna continued, and you could hear his voice through the whole place, though he did not speak so loudly either. But everybody was listening intently.

“‘In the North, my liege. It is understood she is coming to your Highness’s city of Cork.’

“‘She has been observed?’

“‘Assuredly, my liege.’

“‘She remains faithful to her vow?’

“At this all the ladies lowered their eyes, and looked at each other, wondering.

“‘She does, my liege.’

“The words were pronounced with emphasis; and no sooner were they heard than the whole assemblage once more struck the little silver gongs, and it was as if the hollows of the cavern overhead were all filled with the singing of birds.

“‘Your Majesties, my lords and ladies,’ said Don Fierna, ‘we may despatch this piece of business before the revels begin. This faithful one must be rewarded. When she comes to our royal city of Cork, you will assure to her sweet sleep, sweet dreams. You will instruct your attendants. You will banish from her idle fears; you will guard her from the phantoms of the night: the dark and sleep shall be as sweet to her as the day.’

“With that all down the table there was a continuous ‘Yes,’ ‘Yes,’ ‘Yes,’ so that the sound was just like the wind in summer stirring through the beech trees. Don Fierna then gave his hand to the young queen in white velvet; and the king her sweetheart turned to the noble dame who was next him; and so the whole company went away two and two down the great hall (but leaving enough space between the couples for the ladies’ trains to be fairly seen). And then, when the lords and ladies had disappeared into the ball-room, the servitors, in their green jackets and

gray hose, forthwith jumped into the chairs of their masters and mistresses; and there was such a noise of laughing and feasting that the very nightingales could no longer make themselves heard.

“And so you see, my dear Kitty, that so far from having anything to fear from Don Fierna and the fairies and the elves of Inisheen, they really have you under their protection; and it is not the least use your worrying about what you promised at the well, and imagining dark things, for, indeed, promise or no promise, the result will be quite the same. Only, it seems to me, it would be base ingratitude on our part for all the kindness of the invisible world of Don Fierna if we were not to make that pilgrimage. And only once in seven years, too! Dear Kitty, think what a trip that will be! Of course, in married life, if what every one says is true, and if we should prove to be only like other people, one's views of things must naturally get changed; and no doubt the romance of love may get a little tempered down by familiarity and custom; and you can not have such a lot of things to talk over as two people who only meet from time to time, and have all their future to settle. But just think what a re-opening of the past that will be to us two: how we shall seem to see ourselves again standing there as we were seven years before; and if we have had our quarrels or misunderstandings, surely that will be the place to make everything up. My darling, don't look on your promise of that night as something terrible, something to haunt you, but rather as a bit of romance added to the facts of your life—something that you can recall in after-days with a kind of smile, perhaps, but yet with a tender smile, and something that will remind you through possibly more prosaic years of what you and I were thinking of once. Is not that sensible, Sweet eyes?

“About your father: you must let him understand, my darling, that I am quite as anxious as he can be that I should have something definite and settled; but Rome was not built in a day; and if you and I are content to wait for a while, I suppose that is our own business. Do you know, Kitty, that you are very profuse in your assurances that you are content with things as they are? I am not; not at all. I try to imagine what our life will be when we are together; and of course that makes me very impatient when I find another stumbling-block in my way. However, there is no reason for grumbling. Plenty of people have

come to London to try to earn a living, and been worse served than I have been. I have one hundred pounds a year certain ; I have nearly all my time my own ; and I am writing so much, and offering it in so many quarters, that I must in time find out what the newspapers and magazines would wish to have, or what it is they object to. Mind you, I have my own ideals, and when the chance serves, I work at them ; but in this absolute fight for life I have got to make just such bricks as the builder will buy. Some day, Kitty—when you and I can plan things together—after the fight is over, and we have won the fortress, then I shall be able to work in my own way, careless of everybody, and who knows but that one might then ‘strike for honest fame’? I shall look in your eyes ; the old days at Inisheen will come back : that will be inspiration enough.”

“In the meantime, dear Kitty, if I can’t tell you of anything definite and settled as regards my literary work, this at least will please you. I have been thinking over a series of papers describing the nonsense that is talked about politics and political men in tavern parlors and the like—some of it being exquisitely absurd, and I wrote one paper, and sent it to the *Hyde Park Journal*. To my astonishment (and a little bit of delight), it appears in this evening’s edition ; and I send you a copy, though it won’t interest you much. Now the *Hyde Park* is a very good paper, and if they will only continue the series, it will be an excellent thing for me, for the varieties of human folly, especially public-house-politics folly, are endless. So you see things are not so bad ; and you are a good girl to be working so hard—so good that I am not going to talk any more to you about wretched newspapers and my scribbling, and hopes and disappointments. Don’t forget that I love you. I shall be glad to hear of your being in Cork, for then Don Fierna will have his little scouts looking after you and protecting you. Do not forget that I love you.”

CHAPTER XV.

A SYMPOSIUM.

BUT if Fitzgerald's efforts to obtain a footing in literature had so far been productive mostly of disappointment, he was very clearly succeeding in another direction. Mrs. Chetwynd made no secret of her interest in, and wish to befriend, this young man, who seemed to her to resemble in many ways the nephew whom she had lost; and the good old lady, with much tact and delicacy, hinted that he himself might make the suggestion when any opportunity offered. It is not improbable that if Fitzgerald had asked her for funds wherewith to start another magazine, she would have consented; but he had had enough of such experiments.

In the meantime he strove to make his duties as little of a sinecure as was possible. To his own great delight he had absolute *carte blanche* as regarded the ordering of new books or reviews; and he diligently read the one, and glanced over the other, so as to let his patroness know what was going on. But when it actually came to the imparting of this information, the chances were that the little old lady would begin by asking him something about his own affairs, and that not unfrequently led to a mere gossip about the south of Ireland. Once or twice, indeed, she inadvertently called him "Frank"; and then apologized for the mistake, with a quiet tear or two. On another occasion, when he was about to leave, she happened to hear the rain beating heavily against the window.

"Oh, but you must not go out in such a shower, Mr. Fitzgerald," she said, "Or you might ask Saunders to get you a waterproof."

Indeed, she herself rang, and—with a little hesitation, which Fitzgerald understood perfectly—told the man where he would find the coat. Fitzgerald thanked her, of course; and went out, and down into the hall. But something, he scarcely knew what, forbade his making use of this waterproof.

"Whose is it?" he said to the footman who brought it to him.

"It was Mr. Frank's, sir."

He had guessed as much.

"Oh, thank you," he said, rather absently. "I don't think I shall need it. I have not very far to go."

But if Fitzgerald was slow to avail himself, on his own account, of those hinted offers which the kind old lady had made him, it occurred to him that he might do something for his friend John Ross. Mrs. Chetwynd had heard a good deal about the Scotch artist in Fitzgerald's description of their joint occupations and country walks; and at last she said she would like to see some of his work.

"I do not promise to buy any," said the old lady, with her pleasant smile, "for there is scarcely any place we could put them."

Indeed, the house was pretty well filled with the ordinary pictorial adornments of an English dwelling—little pieces of Dutch *genre* in heavy old-fashioned frames; gloomy landscapes a long way after Salvator Rosa; one or two imitations of Wilkie; and a large number of historical engravings, glorious in incident, but less satisfactory in draughtsmanship.

"Besides," added Mrs. Chetwynd, "Mary would accuse me of extravagance, so long as I disapprove of her spending her money on a nine-and-a-half-inch telescope."

"A nine-and-a-half-inch telescope?" said Fitzgerald, in surprise—for he had understood that Miss Chetwynd was a young lady of considerable fortune. "Surely that can not amount to much?"

"So I thought," said the old lady, laughing, "when I heard of it at first. But it appears that the nine and a half inches refer to the diameter of the glass; and I am told the thing looks more like a thirty-two pounder. And then she spends so much of her money on these poor people of hers! Well, it is her own, poor thing. I think I must let her have her way. She shall have the window in her room altered, and she shall have her thirty-two pounder; and then I will buy some of your friend's pictures."

"Oh, but I could not have you buy them on my recommendation," said Fitzgerald, in some alarm. "That would never do. You must have some skilled advice—I don't know enough about pictures—"

"But, according to your account, they are just the very paintings to suit a blind old woman," she said brightly,

"I shall see nothing of them but their color, which you say is so good——"

"But—but I would ask you to have some one else's judgment, Mrs Chetwynd," said he, earnestly. "Of course I think them good I don't see how the work of a man who studies as hard as he does, and who can talk so ably about it, can be anything else. But if you will allow me, I will bring up a few of his sketches; and you might ask some one who is a good judge——"

"As for that, there will be no difficulty," she said, promptly. "We know sveral of the Academicians. It is not unusual for one or other of them to drop in to dinner and have a chat with the scientifics."

"Academicians?" said Fitzgerald, uneasily. "Not *very* old ones?"

She named one or two.

"Oh," said he, gladly, "any one of these would do. I am not afraid of them."

But this conversation had results for himself as well as for his friend. Fitzgerald was in the habit of leaving a minute or two before a quarter to seven, which was the hour for Mrs Chetwynd's table d'hote, as she called it; and even then he sometimes encountered in the hall a guest who had strolled in before the proper time. But this talk about Ross's pictures had made him forgetful; and he was just about to ask his patroness some further question as to what kind of landscape she preferred, when a gong sounded below.

"Goodness gracious me!" exclaimed the old lady. "There is dinner, and Mary has not come back from South Kensington, Mr. Fitzgerald, will you kindly give me your arm downstairs—I am so blind now; and the people will be coming in, and nobody to receive them!"

But at this very moment Miss Chetwynd made her appearance—a trifle breathless, for she had run upstairs.

"Come away, auntie," she said, cheerfully, as she hastily took off her bonnet and cloak, and threw them on a chair. "But why don't you ever persuade Mr. Fitzgerald to stay to dinner? I know he dislikes scientific people——"

It is needless to say that this invitation was warmly seconded: and Fitzgerald who was quite aware of the that informal nature of this nightly table d'hote, and who, perhaps, had somelittle curiosity to see in the flesh one or other of the celebrated people that Mrs. Chetwynd talked so much about, very gratefully and modestly accepted. He did not even

make a pretence of refusing. Mary Chetwynd's proposal had been made so simply and frankly that he met it with equal frankness. He walked into the dining-room after the two ladies, with much calmness; and this time he had nothing to fear about evening dress.

There were three gentleman in the room. One was away in a corner, examining through a double eyeglass that he held in his hand one of the engravings on the walls; the other two were standing on the hearthrug, their backs to the fire. The taller of these was a long thin, cadaverous man, who stooped a little; he had piercing gray eyes under shaggy eyebrows; and very white teeth, which showed when he laughed his prodigious laugh; him Fitzgerald recognized at once, having seen his photograph often enough, as a Dr. Bude. The other he did not know! but he thought it very cool of both these gentlemen to take the entrance of the two ladies with so much indifference. They finished what they had been talking, or rather laughing, about; then they came forward and shook hands; and then sat down as it pleased them at the table. But this indifference was unintentional; for very soon, when some other guest had come in and everybody had sat down, and dinner had begun, it was very clear that Dr. Bude was amongst the foremost to amuse and entertain his hostess. And it must be confessed that there was very little science talked amongst this nondescript gathering of friends and acquaintances. There was a good deal of joking, it is true, when it became known that Mary Chetwynd was to be allowed to have her big telescope; but for the most part the talk was all about public characters, and what So-and-so had said, and where So-and-so was staying. These scientific gentlemen seemed to know a good deal about the comparative merits of certain country houses as places of temporary lodgment; and their talk about fishponds, and cooking and the advantages of having a well heated hall in the middle of a house, was not so very much raised, after all, above the level of Mr. Scobell. Master Willie had more than once wondered what figure Mr. Scobell would cut in this familiar little assemblage of great people; but indeed their conversation was not of an extremely serious nature.

He sat next to Dr. Bude; and as Dr. Bude was engaged in describing, with tremendous laughter, to Mrs. Chetwynd, a conversation he had had with a gentleman whom he had met at a City dinner, Fitzgerald had plenty of leisure to

study the rest of the guests, and also his hostess's niece. He had had no such opportunity before. He had scarcely ever seen Miss Chetwynd. She was mostly engaged in the east of London; when she was in the house, she was occupied in her own room. And now it seemed to him that her expression was a little more gentle, less resolute and self-sufficient, than he had fancied it was. The head was small and beautifully shaped, and she wore her hair more tightly brushed than was the fashion of the time, so that the symmetry of the head was clearly seen. Her features were fine: her complexion somewhat pale; and now he saw that her eyes, which hitherto he had considered to be somewhat cold in their clear, direct way of looking at one, were really of a beautiful blue with dark lashes, and could be expressive enough, whether she seemed intrested in what her neighbor was saying, or was joining in some general merriment. And when she had to submit to some raillery about the forth-coming big telescope, she did it very prettily.

"You know," she said, "the time will come when people will look back on Lord Rosse's telescope as a mere toy."

"Why, of course," said Dr. Bude, coming to her rescue. "You are quite right, Miss Chetwynd. The human race will be driven to invent not only immense telescopes, but also means of conveying themselves to some other planet, that is, when this one grows too cold for human subsistence. When the earth cools—and the process is going on now—so that humanity must flit, you may depend on it, by that time science will have invented means for their removal to a more generous climate. But there must be a beginning in the way of experiment. I appeal to Professor Sims. The Royal Society should do something."

Professor Sims, who was the shorter of the two strangers whom Fitzgerald had found standing before the fire, and who was a white-haired, rosy-faced old gentleman, with gold spectacles, answered immediately,

"No doubt, no doubt," said he. "The necessity must arise. And if you look at what science has done within the last ten years, who is to say what she may not have accomplished within the next—what shall I say?"

"'An eternity or two,' was Alfred de Musset's phrase," suggested Fitzgerald; but it instantly occurred to him that to mention even the name of a sentimentalist like Alfred de Musset among these hard-headed people was absurd. However, it did not much matter; for presently they were con-

sidering whether, when the world had got chilled down to the condition of the moon, the last traces of human occupation would be the Pyramids or the Colosseum. Some one suggested the buried cities of Mexico ; and so the matter dropped.

The dinner was a plain one as compared with the banquet which Hilton Clarke had given in the Albany ; and Fitzgerald observed that the majority of the gentlemen present drank no wine, or, at most, a little claret and water. Indeed, the whole of the proceedings were somewhat abnormal ; for, directly the frugal repast was over, coffee and cigarettes were produced, and the ladies remained. Then one or another of the guests would get up, and without any formal apology, shake hands with Mrs. Chetwynd and her niece, and say " Good-night," or " Au revoir," or perhaps nothing at all, to the others, and be off.

" I must be off too directly," said Dr. Bude to Fitzgerald. " I have some people coming to look at a few simple experiments with the spectroscope ; and I must go and see that my battery is ready. Will you come ? I can show you a nine-and-a-half-inch telescope, since that seems to interest you."

" Oh, certainly ; I shall be delighted," said Fitzgerald, with great eagerness. This Dr. Bude had been very kind in one or two little things he has said during dinner. He knew about the *Household Magazine*. He knew about Fitzgerald's present duties. He seemed a friendly sort of person ; and the mere invitation was a compliment coming from one so well known.

The only doubt in Fitzgerald's mind was as to the propriety of his going away while any of the others remained. He had no lecture to deliver, nor any learned society to attend. Moreover, there did not seem much chance of his explaining the circumstances to Mrs. Chetwynd ; for the pretty old lady—who seemed so pleased that all these people should drop in to chat with her for an hour—was listening intently to the gentleman on her left ; and he was describing the very remarkable high jinks he had observed in a great person's house immediately after dinner—the ladies, indeed, taking part in them ; and he was warmly defending these on hygienic principles, although hoping that nothing about them would get into the papers, through some unfortunate accident happening. However, Dr. Bude got him out of the dilemma ; for he rose and said :—

“Good-night, Mrs. Chetwynd. I must be off to get my things ready; and I am going to take Mr. Fitzgerald with me, to show him what a nine-and-a-half-inch telescope is like.”

He went out of the room without saying good-by to anybody else, Fitzgerald following; and the latter, in a minute or so, found himself, for the first time in his life, in a private hansom—a vehicle which went so smoothly and so rapidly that he seemed to be going through the air on wings.

Dr. Bude's house was in the Brompton Road—a rather shabby-looking building outside, but spacious within. Fitzgerald followed his host up to the first floor, the back part of which consisted of an apartment that seemed partly an observatory, partly a library, and partly a laboratory. An assistant was at the moment arranging some glass tubes and two spectroscopes on a table; and Dr. Bude, throwing off his coat, though the dusky room was far from being over-warm, proceeded to test the various wires and other apparatus, all of which were a profound mystery to his guest.

“I suppose you see a great deal of Miss Chetwynd?” he said; and at the same moment the electric light flashed into a tube, causing Fitzgerald's eyes to jump.

“Oh, no, very little.”

“She is a very remarkable woman,” said the other, with decision; though indeed, he was now on his knees on the floor, examining the battery. “She might do something, that girl. She has a fine brain—acute and penetrating. But she has had no training; that is the mischief of it. She should have been brought up on mathematics. But, after all, the number of women who have done anything in pure science is very small. I think she is throwing herself away on this education of the poorest classes; that is vestrymen's work; though perhaps I should not say so, for I don't know precisely what she is at.”

Then he rose and clapped his hands together, to get rid of the dust.

“I was amused,” he said, with a laugh. “She asked me what would be the most effectual way of teaching these ignorant people the perniciousness of breathing foul air. You know how they huddle together for warmth, and cover the children over with such bedclothes as they have got. I

think she was going to deliver a lecture on 'Fresh Air and Pure Water' somewhere or other——"

"Yes, I know she has done that," said Fitzgerald, as the tall lean man turned toward the table again and continued his preparations.

"Well, she very naturally concluded that tumbling gases of different weights into jars, or extinguishing tapers, would not be impressive enough; so I told her to get a sparrow, to tie its feet down to a bit of board, and to put over it a bell-jar before these people, and ask them to watch what will happen to the bird merely through its breathing its own breath. Of course the little creature becomes asphyxiated, staggers, and falls, and ultimately dies. Doubtless, I told her, the most effective way of exhibiting the experiment would be to raise the bell-jar during the process of asphyxiation, and show the reviving effect of the fresh air; then to close it again until death preached its moral. She said she would do that. She was quite delighted. What lesson could be more obvious——"

But at this moment there was a sound of footsteps on the stairs; and the Doctor had to whip on his coat, and go and receive two or three young people who now entered. Fitzgerald did not like that story about the sparrow. Miss Chetwynd was no Lesbia, clearly. And although the conscience of a wild-fowl shooter is apt to be hard, and although he knew quite well that the asphyxiation of a sparrow, or even twenty dozen of sparrows, was scarcely to be considered if it induced a certain number of human beings to treat their children more humanely—still—still

The Doctor came back.

"I have a sort of class," he explained to Fitzgerald, "who come and practice a little, and ask questions, before the vulgar world arrives to be amused. I hope it won't be tedious for you. If you prefer it, my assistant will arrange the telescope for you; the night is beautifully clear——"

"Oh no, not at all. Was Miss Chetwynd's experiment successful?"

"Why, I forgot to finish my story. She got the sparrow, and the string, and the board, and the bell-jar, all complete; and she thought, to make sure, she would make her first trial before her aunt in the drawing-room. And it was all quite successful until the first stagger of the little creature; then she hesitated; then she shook her head. Off came the bell-jar at once; she opened the window, and cut

the string, and out went Jack Sparrow. Nothing would induce her to repeat the experiment."

"I should not have thought she was so sentimental," said Fitzgerald.

"Ah, that's just it," said the Doctor, as he heated a bit of copper wire at a gas jet. "A woman never ceases to be a woman, whatever she is at. Her reason fails her when she is confronted by suffering; her heart overmasters her head. But in pure science that girl might have done something if she had had proper training. She has a fine quality of brain. I can tell how much people know by their questions. Her questions are always sharp and to the point. When she comes here she knows precisely what she wants——"

The good Doctor seemed to like talking about Mary Chetwynd; but on this occasion he was checked by the appearance of the young lady herself, who arrived quite alone. She seemed surprised to find Fitzgerald there, though she said nothing beyond an ordinary greeting. She at once went forward to the table; and the Doctor was particular in finding her a chair, though the others who were now arriving were allowed to stand about anyhow.

What followed was quite unintelligible to Fitzgerald, for at that time the theory of spectroscopy was much less familiar to the public than it is nowadays, when every second schoolgirl has a spectroscope in her pocket. But if the meaning of the experiments was dark to him, the manners of the students were interesting enough; and he could readily distinguish between the serious ones, who wore mostly silent, or only asking a question now and again, and the flippant ones, who exclaimed with terror at the ghastly appearances of each other's faces when a little common salt was ignited at a Bunsen burner, and who cried, "Oh, how sweetly lovely!" when a trifle of chloride of lithium spread abroad a rose-red flame. But perhaps it was the demeanor of Mary Chetwynd that most engaged his attention; and he could see that her questions were the most promptly answered, and that to her most of the explanations were addressed. Fitzgerald, standing apart by the mantelpiece, and observing, out of that motley group only these two—the long, lean, pale-faced teacher, and the young lady student who sat in a chair there following his words with a serious attention—began to dream dreams. Why should not these two cold intelligences go through the

world together, like twin stars sailing through the night? He was considerably her elder, to be sure; but the girl who was sitting there, with the fine, serious, thoughtful face, was more likely to think of his high reputation than of his years. What a strange love-making it would be! Moon-lit walks with disquisitions on the spectrum of Sirius. The Bunsen burner looked ghostly enough; but he knew that Don Fierna and the elves would fly away from it. He could scarcely help laughing when he thought of these two tall persons standing on each of the little stream, and holding each other's hand. What would the phrase be? "Over HO² in rapid motion?" And then he thought of Kitty. Kitty did not know, probably, that water consisted of hydrogen and oxygen; but Kitty knew how to make love. He sent her a kiss in imagination. By this time of the night she would be at home—away up there on the hill, opposite Shandon Bells.

These speculations about the possible future of Dr. Bude and Miss Mary Chetwynd were somewhat rudely dispelled by the entrance of a stout and comely dame in rustling black silk, who cheerfully greeted the various pupils, and kissed Miss Chetwynd very affectionately, and then, addressing the lecturer as "My dear," asked him for certain keys. The next minute Fitzgerald was introduced to this buxom and good-humored-looking lady, who turned out to be Mrs. Bude; so that he had to bid good-by to that horoscope of the scientific lovers. Mrs. Bude did not remain long; she was evidently in a hurry; Fitzgerald returned to the contemplative study of the heads before him, as these were illumined from time to time by the various colors of different metals.

Something else was going forward, however, on this first floor. The drawing-room, with which this observatory was connected, had been brilliantly lit up; and now steps could be heard on the stairs outside, and the names of guests being announced as they reached the door. Then some of these began to stroll from the drawing-room into the observatory; and very soon the Doctor was busy enough, with greeting these new-comers, and with trying to show them something they could understand. His patience and good-humor seemed to Fitzgerald admirable. "Oh, what a lovely green!" "Oh, how sweetly pretty!" "Must I shut one eye to look through?" "Doctor, why should one line be so much clearer than the other?"

“And so you know that all these things are in the sun?”
“Do show my husband that pretty green color again!” The good doctor appeared to be talking to all these ladies and gentlemen at once; sometimes frankly laughing at their questions; and not at all displeased that he should be addressed as if he were the conductor of a show. Fitzgerald could perceive that Miss Chetwynd was calmly regarding the new-comers; once or twice he caught her smiling to herself.

Amid the crowd of people who kept strolling in from the large and well-lit drawing-room to the small and dusty laboratory, and strolling back again, there was one lady who very much interested him, partly because she was remarkably pretty, and partly because of a chance exclamation of hers that he overheard. The Doctor was explaining to a little group of people the source of color in objects—the absorption or reflection of the different rays of light, and so forth; and in illustration he brought a little bunch of scarlet geraniums in a glass, turned off the light, then ignited some common salt at the Bunsen burner, producing a powerful yellow flame. Of course the geraniums became of a ghastly gray; and this pretty lady, perhaps not quite understanding that nothing had happened to them, exclaimed to herself, “Poor things!” Fitzgerald liked her for that. She seemed to recognize some principle of life in the flowers, as though they were associated with humanity somehow; and although there might have been no profound intention in her remark, and although, when the gas was lit again, the geraniums were found to be quite as scarlet as ever, nevertheless Fitzgerald was convinced that she must be a nice sort of woman. Imagine, then, his surprise when, later in the evening, the experiments being all over, and he himself, doubtful whether he ought to remain, and yet anxious to send some account of so brilliant an assemblage to Kitty, rather keeping himself in the background, he found himself dragged from his obscurity by the diligent Doctor, and forthwith introduced to this very lady, and directed to take her downstairs to supper. Not only that, but the name she bore was also that of a distinguished Academician. Was it possible, he asked himself, as he conducted her downstairs, that she should be the wife of the great painter? He determined to find out; here, indeed, would be something to talk over with John Ross.

Well, he got her a place at the long table, and timidly asked her what she would take—a sandwich, perhaps?

“I’m not so young as I look,” said this pretty, English-looking woman, with the large girlish gray eyes. “I am the mother of three children, and at my time of life I know better than to destroy myself with sandwiches. No—anything else you can get!”

She was an amazingly frank person, and very pleasant in her speech and her laugh. When he had got her some cold turkey, and some bread, and a glass of claret, he ventured to ask her, after some vague reference to something on the walls, whether she was very fond of pictures.

“I admire my husband’s, of course,” she said.

Then he knew he was right.

“Oh, of course,” said he, with greater confidence. “Every one does that. I suppose, now,” he added, rather hesitatingly, “your husband has become so accustomed to his distinguished position—I mean so familiar with his place in the Academy—that he couldn’t quite realize the anxiety of the outside men, of those who are not well known, about the fate of their pictures? That would not interest him much, would it? I mean it would not be possible to induce him to interest himself in—in helping, for example—an artist who was not known——”

This was not at all satisfactory, especially as she seemed to imagine he was pleading for himself.

“Are you an artist?” she asked at length, with a frank look.

“Oh no.”

“Well, then, to tell you the truth,” said she, “I don’t know what anxiety the outsiders may feel, but it isn’t half of the anxiety they cause me. I know when my husband is on the Hanging Committee it thoroughly breaks him down for three weeks after. It is by far the hardest work of the year for him. And then the thanks!—to be abused by the public, and accused of envy by the outsiders. Envy, indeed? I wonder who it is that my husband needs envy?”

“Why, not any one,” said Fitzgerald, warmly; for he liked the human nature, the frank sincerity, of this woman.

“I wish they’d let the outsiders come in and hang their own pictures for themselves,” she said, with a laugh. “I suppose they’d all quite agree. I wish they would paint better, and grumble less.”

“Oh, but the outsider I was thinking of is not like

that," said Fitzgerald, pleasantly, for he was not in the least offended by her humorous petulance. "He paints very well, and does not grumble at all. He is quite content. Only, I thought if your husband would be so kind as merely to remember his name, and look at his work when it is sent in——"

"But my husband was on the Council last year; so he won't be again for some time—thank goodness!"

"So there is no use in my asking you to intercede?"

"No, not even if you offer to bribe me with sandwiches. But," she added, looking up at him for a moment, "what is your friend's name?"

"John Ross."

"That is not a difficult name to remember. John Ross. Why are you interested in him—you are not Scotch?"

"He is a neighbor of mine; and—and he does good work, I think, and ought to be better known."

"Landscape or figures?"

"Landscape."

"I guessed as much. The Scotchmen take to landscape because they can't draw. Now take me back, please, for I must fetch my husband and get home; and I shan't forget your friend's name, for I never had sandwiches offered me as a bribe before."

He escorted her upstairs again, and then seized the first opportunity of slipping away. In the hall he found he had been preceded by Miss Chetwynd, who, quite alone, was tying something round her neck, the night being cold. He hesitated for a second, not quite knowing what was proper for him to do; and then, at a venture, he went forward, and said,

"Miss Chetwynd, can I get your carriage for you?"

"No, thank you," she said, as he thought, a trifle ungraciously and stiffly. "My cab is outside. I know the man."

The servant opened the hall door, and she passed out, Fitzgerald lingering for a moment, under pretence of buttoning his coat. Her refusal to allow him to be of this slight service had been, as he considered, somewhat too explicit. What had he done? Or was she unaware that her manner was at times a little too decided and cold and repellent?"

It mattered not to him. He walked away through the chill dark night to the vacant courtyard and the empty

room, thinking what a memorable and wonderful evening that had been for him. Perhaps never such another would happen to him; for when again was he likely to meet a great man of science to carry him off, on the friendly inspiration of the moment, and introduce him to such a gathering? And indeed the spectacle had moved him to neither emulation or regret. It was not the way of life he would choose if it were open to him. He had his own dreams and ambitions, his own notions of what was beautiful and worth having in the world; and if Mary Chetwynd had any vague fancy that he wished to gain an entrance into distinguished or fashionable society, either through a scientific doorway or through any other, she was quite mistaken. But more probably she had not even given a thought to the matter; and he was content.

CHAPTER XVI.

A MORNING WALK AND OTHER MATTERS.

[N. B. — This chapter may very conveniently be passed over by those who wish to get on with “the story”; for it contains little beyond a description of one or two influences which were at this time in a measure forming the character of this young man, and so far shaping the work of his after life.]

NEXT morning Fitzgerald had promised to go for a walk with his Scotch neighbor, who had a theory that neither could he paint nor his companion write properly unless they went forth from time to time to see what the outside world was looking like. Moreover, these periodical excursions were undertaken without any regard to the weather. John Ross used to say that anybody could admire the chromolithograph aspects of nature, but that it wanted training and affectionate care and watchfulness to observe the beautifulness of gray days and wet roads and wintry skies. Fitzgerald, of course, was nothing loath. He had brought his shooting boots and gaiters with him from Ireland, and he had a serviceable waterproof; he

was just as ready as Ross to go splashing away through the mud to Kew, to see what the wilderness part of the Gardens (a favorite haunt of theirs, and but little known to the public) was like in driving rain, or in feathery snow, or in clear hard frost when the red berries shone among the green. It was wonderful how interesting the world had become to him. He no longer confined his attention, when out walking, to the animals and birds he might observe (with rapid calculations as to whether they were within shot or without); now, if there was nothing else to be seen, the gradation of light on the puddles of a rainy road he found to be quite worth looking at. Nothing had been taken away from the world, but a great deal added. It was of itself something that he had learned not even to despise the commonplace gray days that in the winter so frequently hung over Chelsea.

But he had an added interest in these various perambulations of which his companion knew nothing: he was continually on the outlook for some pretty little cottage, some quaint river-side house, that would meet with the approval of Kitty's black eyes when the great time came. This imaginary nest-building was a most fascinating kind of occupation. Sometimes he would go away by himself and ramble through all sorts of strange suburban places, in the hope of meeting with something so very quaint and picturesque and secluded that even Kitty—who rather avoided that subject, and would not express any preference for town or country—might have her curiosity aroused. So far the most engaging place he had seen was a small odd-looking house in Grosvenor Road, fronting the river. It appeared to have been an old-fashioned tavern at one time; but now it was a little private dwelling, with odd inequalities about the windows and gables, and very prettily painted in white and green. Were not these the very windows for Kitty to adorn with trailing plants and flower-boxes? Again and again, at a convenient distance, he stood and watched the house, and tried to imagine Kitty actually there, reaching up her arms to put a branch so, or so; perhaps singing the while, perhaps whistling to the blackbird in the cage. There was the slight drawback, it is true, that the house was not to be let; but then he and Kitty had still a long time of waiting before them, and who knew what might not happen in that interval? Besides, where there was one little habitation that seemed so charming,

there might be others ; and so, whatever subject John Ross might be descanting on, in his fiery-headed fashion, and however attentively Fitzgerald might be listening, there was nothing to prevent the eyes of the latter from wandering from cottage to cottage, from villa to villa, from garden to garden, in a sort of vague mechanical quest for a pretty resting-place for Kitty.

But this particular morning was clear and cold and fine—an excellent morning for walking ; and of course Fitzgerald had a great deal to tell about his experiences of the previous night, and his proposal to take up some of his companion's pictures to show to Mrs. Chetwynd.

"You see, if she were to take two or three of them, it might be a great advantage to you," observed Fitzgerald.

"It would be a very distinct and solid advantage," said the red-bearded gentleman, with a laugh.

"Oh, but I mean apart from the money. Mrs. Chetwynd knows some of the Academicians ; and if your pictures were seen by them at her house, don't you see ? it might do you good. Oh, that reminds me. I met the wife of an Academician last night. I sha'n't tell you her name, for she said something about Scotch artists that you won't like."

"What was it ?"

"She said they took to landscape because they couldn't draw."

No doubt Fitzgerald repeated this with the malicious intention of making his companion angry ; and indeed for a moment John Ross stood stock-still ; but then again he laughed good-naturedly, and continued his walking.

"Ay, I'm thinking her husband maun be one o' the story-tellers."

"Story-tellers ?"

"There's plenty of them among the English artists—men who ought to belong to your business, no' to mine. Pent is what they know least about ; but they can tell a pretty story—out o' a book. That is something, after all. If they know little about color, at least they can help the ignorant public to a bit of sentiment or the like. But there's one thing the Scotch have done, my lad ; and that again and again ; they have had to bring both English literature and art back to nature. It was when people were given over to the wretched artificicialities of the Pope school that Allan Ramsay's 'Gentle Shepherd' and

Thomson's 'Seasons' got them back out o' that hot-house to look at real nature and human nature——"

"Pope? Is that what you think of Pope?" said his companion, eagerly; for he had his own grudge on that score.

"Pope?" repeated John Ross. "I consider——"

But, as it turned out, there was to be no conjoint dancing on a dead man's grave, for at this moment Ross's attention was drawn to two young ladies who were crossing the Hammersmith Road in front of them.

"Heaven save us!" he exclaimed. "Did ever ye see the like o' that?"

"Their waists, do you mean?" his companion said; for, indeed, the two young ladies, probably sisters, for they were dressed precisely alike, had waists of such small dimensions that more than one person had turned and stared at them.

"The ignorant craytures," said John Ross, half angrily, "to think that men admire a spectacle like that! Have they no common-sense?"

"They must have pretty good muscles, at all events, to have pulled themselves in like that," his companion said.

"But bless me, common-sense should tell a young lass that it's the foolishest thing in the world for her to remind people that she has an internal economy at all. She ought to have none, in your imagination. She ought to be all spirit and poetry; just an amiable young life looking out on the world with sweetness and innocence and a wish to be friendly. But when you see a waist like that, confound it, ye're made to ask yourself where the mischief she has put her liver!"

John Ross seemed to resent the appearance of these young ladies as if he had sustained some personal injury.

"I say that anything that suggests that a young lass has a spine, or a liver, or anything of the kind, is a most intolerable nuisance," said Ross, angrily. "And to deform one of the most beautiful things in the world, too—that is, the figure of a young woman from the shoulders to the waist. Look at that; do you know what that is?"

He took out his sketch-book, and made a few rapid lines on one of the blank pages.

"A vase, I suppose."

"That is the Canopian vase; that has always been understood to have been imitated from the female figure.

But look what it would be if the base were to be narrowed like the waist of one of those girls! Look; where is your proportion now? What kind of a vase is that?"

"Well, if you are only drew the lines down a little bit farther, it would be like one of the Pompeiian earthen jars——"

"Ah, the jars they stuck into the ground. Poor cratures, that's just what they lasses there are working for. I wonder if they havena got a mother to skelp them.

However, the disappearance of the young ladies round a corner removed the cause of his grumbling; and very soon he had quite recovered his equanimity, for now the air was growing clearer, the roads wider, the gardens between the houses were larger, and the sunlight was making the wintry trees and bushes look quite cheerful.

"Look at that, now," Ross said, coming to a sudden halt before some tall maples, the branches of which, reaching away into the blue, were of the most brilliant gold where the bark had peeled off. "Can you get anything stronger in color than that in the middle of summer? Look how fine the blue is above!"

"Yes, but it would look top-heavy in a picture, wouldn't it?"

"No, no, my lad; there you're mistaken. Sunlight always comes out; no fear of yellow not holding its own. If you were painting that, you would find the blue go as far back as ever ye wanted it. I think if I were a king, that's what I would have in my dining-chamber—solid gold up to about the height of your head; and then above that all a pale blue, and the roof a pale blue, so that you could let your eyes go away a great distance when you lifted them from the table. And then, in case the solid gold of the wall would make you feel as if you were in a metal case, I would have a procession of figures, all in pure scarlet, perhaps mediæval figures, with trellis-work, or better still, a Greek procession——"

"You would have plenty of color, then," said Fitzgerald, laughing. "Gold, scarlet, and pale blue."

"The three primaries; why not?"

But as there was not much apparent chance of either of these two having to study this matter practically, it was abandoned; and very soon they found themselves in the wilderness lying between the formal part of Kew Gardens and the river. Here it was a great delight to Fitzgerald

to find himself so completely removed from all the surroundings of town life—watching the squirrels, and the birds, and what not, while his companion now and again took jottings of what he called the anatomy of the different kinds of trees. The sunlight was quite clear here, and there was plenty of rich color among the dark green firs and the browns and reds of withered leaves, and the glowing scarlet of the berries that still remained on the bushes. Then they walked back to the bridge; and for the first time since he had left Inisheen Fitzgerald got into a boat, and enjoyed the new sensation of managing a pair of sculls, while Ross sat in the stern, and seemed pleased that the pull against the heavy current was just about as much as Master Willie wanted. And then they had a snack of luncheon at the nearest hotel; and then they set out to walk back to London, with the chill gray dusk of the afternoon slowly settling down.

But when they did get back to the big hollow-sounding studio, Fitzgerald discovered that he had a very difficult task before him. Whether it was that John Ross was overfond of these children of his brain and skill, and disliked parting with them, or whether it was that he detested the pecuniary side of his profession altogether, Fitzgerald found that he could get no help from him in the selection of the pictures or sketches he wished to take to Mrs. Chetwynd.

“How can I tell what any one’s fancy may be?” said he, almost surlily. “Most likely she would rather have a picture of a white lap-dog with a bit of pink ribbon round his neck.”

“Well, we will see,” remarked Fitzgerald, who had at length chosen out half a dozen canvases, and was tying them together. “And now I must have a cab—for the first time since I came to London; but I expect you to pay that, Ross, if I sell any of your pictures. That will be my commission.”

Moreover, he was himself a little anxious. As the hansom (which was not quite so smooth-going as that of Dr. Bude) carried him up to Hyde Park Gardens, he began to suspect that some of Ross’s disinclination had probably arisen from the fear that his work might be misunderstood, and subjected to the ignominy of refusal. That was bad enough at the Academy; but in the case of the Academy there was also the consoling possibility that it

was want of space which was the practical cause of rejection. Mr. Ross was a proud man in his way, little as he was disposed to overrate the value of his work. And Fitzgerald, when he was actually carrying these canvases upstairs, began to think that he had assumed a very serious responsibility.

There is no doubt that this kind old lady, who examined these landscapes as well as she could with the aid of a large magnifying-glass, would at once, in her good-humored way, have purchased some of them, or perhaps even the whole of them; but this he would not hear of. It was not altogether as a favor to an unknown artist that he wished to dispose of them, he gently reminded her: perhaps if one or two of her friends saw these studies they would be very glad to get them. In any case he would rather have her wait for their opinion.

"Oh, very well," said she, good-naturedly. "And the price?"

Fitzgerald flushed uneasily.

"I could not get my friend to say exactly. Perhaps—perhaps if you were to ask Mr.— to value them— Being an Academician, he ought to know."

"Oh, but that would never do. So much depends on circumstances. So much depends on your friend's own valuation. Have you no guess?"

"Well," said Fitzgerald, desperately, "I may as well make a guess; for Mr. Ross won't help me. I think they are worth more—but he is not known, of course—and I don't think £20 each would be too much——"

"Would it be too little?" said the little old lady, with a charming frankness. "For who knows what fancy some of our friends may take for them?"

"If you would not mind asking Mr.—" he again suggested.

"Well, I will," she said. "On that basis, that if we take them at £20 each, your friend won't be greatly dissatisfied."

"I think he will be very much pleased. Only," he added, with some hesitation, "if I might ask another favor, it would be that supposing Mr. — does not come here this evening, or very soon, indeed, you might not be too long in arriving at some decision. The fact is, I would not like Mr. Ross to be thinking that his studies were waiting out on approval, as it were——"

"I understand perfectly," said the good old lady, "and there will be no delay, I promise you."

That night Fitzgerald was in Ross's studio. Both were smoking and talking; but Ross had his sketch-book on his knee, and also handy a box of water-colors. He was illustrating a favorite theory of his that after such a walk as they had had that morning, the memory recalls most clearly, if not exclusively, such objects as were lit up by the sunlight; and he was jotting down memoranda of things he could remember—the brass knob on a house door, the zinc roof of a conservatory, a red cart-wheel against a gray wall, and so forth, and so forth—in an aimless sort of way, and mainly for amusement.

"There's somebody going up your stairs," he said.

Fitzgerald went out and called, "Who's there?"

"A letter for Mr. Fitzgerald," said a voice from above.

"All right. Bring it here. Do you want an answer?"

"No, sir," said the lad, "I believe not, sir. Good-night, sir."

"Good-night."

Fitzgerald hesitated. He knew the letter was from Mrs. Chetwynd, for the address was in Miss Chetwynd's handwriting; and he would gladly, for the sake of preparation, have opened it in his own room. But here was Ross calling from within to know what was the matter, and so he boldly resolved to enter and open the letter before him, whatever the decision might be.

"DEAR MR. FITZGERALD" (this was what Miss Chetwynd's clear, beautiful, precise handwriting said),—"My aunt says you seemed anxious to know as soon as possible the fate of your friend's sketches, and desires me to send you this note to-night. They have been much admired, I believe. Mr. —took one, Dr. Bude another, and my aunt keeps the remaining four; and I am asked to enclose this check for £120, as she thinks that was about what you suggested.

"Yours faithfully,
"MARY CHETWYND."

"Now isn't that a kind old lady?" said Fitzgerald "Fancy her taking the trouble to send a message at this time of night! Well, what do you say, Ross? Is it enough? You know I had nothing to guide me. Is it enough?"

John Ross was holding the letter in his hand, and staring at it absently.

"I wonder which one he took? I would give anything just to find that out," said he, apparently to himself.

Fitzgerald took the letter from him, and glanced at it again.

"Why, of course," said he. "I did not notice it. That was the Academician himself who took one. I shall find out to-morrow which one he bought. But I want to know whether the money is sufficient."

"Plenty—plenty. Enough and to spare."

"Then I will trouble you for eighteenpence, that I paid for that cab."

"We'll make a better job of it than that, my lad," said he, coming to the money question at last, and shoving the check across the small table. "Ye'll just take a clear half o' that; and ye'll take a holiday; and go away over to Ireland and see the young lass that ye're aye thinking about, though ye will not say so; and cheer her up. That's sensible."

Fitzgerald gave a slight backward touch to the check.

"No, thank you," said he (his face a little red). "I am not in want of money, thank you all the same. What I am in want of," he added, after a second, and with his eyes grown distant, "is some more certain employment. Then I would go back to Ireland gladly enough for a day or two. But this literary business is so difficult."

"Is it worse than pentin?" the other demanded. "When have I had as much money as that at one time? Never in all my life! And sooner or later ye'll just drop on your feet like that; and not a mere chance, such as that is, but a settled thing, a permanency; and then I know fine what will happen. 'Whistle and I'll come to ye, my lad!' and it's a' smiles, and white satin, and nervousness, and the laughing and joking of your friends; and if ye havena a jar o' good Scotch whiskey for that day, then my name's not John Ross!"

"In the meantime," said Fitzgerald looking a bit more cheerful, "I propose——"

"In the meantime, are you going to take the money?" said Ross, in his downright way. "Why not? I could not have got as much for them myself. And I have plenty to go on with."

"No," says Fitzgerald, hastily; "but I'll tell what you

can do, if you like. Next Saturday Mrs. Chetwynd is going down to Hastings until the Monday. Now on the Saturday we shall have a grand holiday, and you shall pay for everything, from the rising of the sun till the going down of the same—in fact, until we get back here.”

“Most certainly—most certainly; but where are ye going this time?”

“Down the Thames—all about the docks and wharves. I have not smelt tar, or stumbled over a rope, or had a chat with a captain, since I left the south of Ireland. And won’t you see color there, if the day is fine—the river, the barges, the ruddy sails——”

“It’s done with ye,” said Ross, decisively. “It’s done with you. And we’ll get our dinner somewhere—if possible in a place overlooking the river. We will find out some old-fashioned tavern—propped up on piles, maybe—with a buxom landlady in the bar, among the Schiedam bottles and the silver, and the landlord a-coming in to us with a bottle o’ Madeira forty years old, and sitting down, of course, and having a crack wi’ us. And then—but can ye keep a secret?”

“What is it?”

“Then, I’m thinking, my lad, when that bottle’s opened, and mum’s the word except for guesses—I’m thinking, without any breach of secrecy on your part, and without any impudence on mine: what do ye say, then, if, when that bottle was opened, we were to drink a glass ‘*To the lass that’s over the water*’?”

CHAPTER XVII.

AN APPARITION.

BUT it was not fated that Fitzgerald should go to the docks; the docks, or a least a representative of them, came to him. The following day, early in the afternoon, he was working away as industriously as usual—as industriously as if he had had no experience of the coyness or indifference of London publishers and editors. He was deeply intent on what he was about; and so, when he heard outside the pre-

liminary tinkling of a banjo, and made sure he was about to be serenaded by a nigger-minstrel, he rose with much angry impatience and went to the door, not quite sure whether the best way to get rid of the man was to throw something to him or to throw something at him.

When, however, he went outside, a most extraordinary scene was presented to him in the courtyard below. It was raining hard to begin with. The nigger-minstrel seemed to be very drunk and very merry; and he was not alone; for backing from him, apparently in abject terror, was a singular-looking creature, whose face Fitzgerald could not see, but who wore a pilot-jacket much too big for him, and sou'wester, and carried a large bundle slung over his shoulder by means of a stick. The further that this little man in the big sou'wester retreated—his gestures indicating a cowering fear—the nearer came this capering soot-faced idiot in the dress-coat, white breeches, and vast pink collar, singing snatches of doggerel, or begging for money with a sort of drunken facetiousness.

“Now, Paddy, a sixpence won't hurt ye. Not a sixpence for the poor musician? A drop o' dog's-nose, Paddy—twopennorth o' gin, then, old man.”

Then he twanged his banjo again, and capered and skipped, clearly enjoying the obvious fright of his victim.

“Where's your shillalagh, Paddy? Och, but ye're the broth of a boy. Not twopennorth o' gin for the poor musician, Paddy?”

But the little man had retreated until he had reached the foot of the stairs, and could back no further. In his desperation he shouted:—

“Away wid ye! Away wid ye!” and Fitzgerald suddenly fancied that the voice was familiar to him.

The nigger minstrel was not to be balked of his drunken fun. He skipped and danced round his victim, poking at his face with his banjo. Then something desperate happened all at once. The little man dropped his bundle, and, with the stick that had supported it in his hand, seemed to jump at his enemy like a wildcat.

“Blood alive, but I'll bate your head in!” he yelled; and the next moment there was a battering of blows, that seemed all the more terrible because most of them fell on the banjo, with which the nigger was vainly defending himself. Fitzgerald thought it was high time to interfere,

“Here, you!” he called from the top of the stairs. “What are you doing there?”

The scrimmage ceased for a second as the little man looked up; then he uttered a slight cry. In three bounds he was up the stairs.

“Oh, Masther Willie, ’tis yoursilf at last!” he cried. “Glory be to God! Glory be to God! ’Tis yoursilf at last Masther Willie——”

But in his agitation Andy the Hopper could not get rid of his alarm; and a frightened glance told him that his enemy was also coming up the stairs.

“Away wid ye! Away wid ye, ye bligard! Oh, Masther Willie, what kind of a man is that? Sure I thought he was the divil!”

“Did you never see a nigger-minstrel before?” said Fitzgerald, laughing, but keeping an eye on the musician. “Well, if he isn’t the divil, Andy, you’ll have the divil to pay; for you’ve broken his banjo.”

“And sarve the bligard right—the dhirty bligard!” said Andy, who was much braver now, with Master Willie in front of him. “Sure I tould him I’d bate him, and I did—the bligard!”

But the minstrel was no longer facetious; nor was he irate either. He was morose. He contemplated the smashed strings of the banjo with a gloomy air. Then he tried to get Fitzgerald to believe that this savage Paddy had attacked him; and when Fitzgerald remarked that he had seen the affair from the beginning, the complaint dwindled down into a lachrymose petition for some compensation. Would the gentleman look at what had been done to his hat and wig? Would the kind gentleman give a poor man a drop o’ something to drink, to keep out the rheumatics! At last he went away, pacified with a shilling; but after Fitzgerald and his new companion had gone inside and shut the door, they heard an extraordinary burst of shrill laughter in the courtyard below, as if the departing minstrel had just remembered again the joke he had played off on the frightened Paddy.

“Well, Andy, sit down and tell me what has brought you to London.”

But Andy was quite bewildered. His delight at seeing the young master again; the fright of his encounter with the black creature; the strangeness of this big, bare apart

ment—these seemed to deprive him of speech. And then he uttered an exclamation:—

“Oh, mother o’ Moses, if the bligard hasn’t taken my bag!”

“What bag, Andy?”

“The bag wid the snipes, and the tale and the hares. Sure the sight of your face, Masther Willie, has dhrew away my sinses——”

“You must have left it down below—go and see.”

Andy quickly moved to the door, and then as suddenly paused.

“Sure, Masther Willie, axin’ your pardon, would you come too?”

Fitzgerald burst out laughing, but he went to the top of the stairs.

“The fellow’s gone, Andy; you need not be afraid. And so is your bag, I imagine.”

But, to Andy’s great delight, he found the bag, which had been kicked past the corner of the building during the scuffle, and so had escaped observation when they were retiring from the scene of the fight. And a very heavy bag it was—this waterproof sack which Andy the Hopper having removed his sou’wester and his big pilot-jacket, proceeded to open. There were snipe, and teal, and golden plover, and what not, and there were three splendid plump brown hares. It seemed quite natural to see this little red-haired leprechaun-looking Andy on his knees sorting out the game.

“And where did all these come from, Andy?”

“Sure, some from the bog, and some from the mountain,” answered Andy, imperturbably.

“And who shot them?”

“Is it who shot them? Who would be afther shooting them but mesilf, your honor?”

“And who gave you leave to shoot the mountain?”

“Lave?” said Andy, looking up with a quite honest stare of the small clear blue eyes. “There is no one ’d be axing for lave to shoot a shnipe or a hare for yer honor. Yerra, who’d be axing for lave?”

“Oh, Andy, Andy!” said Fitzgerald. “What have you been after?”

For now, indeed, as Andy with a little hesitation, drew out a brace of fine-plumaged pheasants, and stroked their

feathers down, and smoothed out their long tails, even Andy seemed a little bit self-conscious.

“Oh, Andy, Andy what have you been up to?”

“Thru for you, sir,” said Andy, looking very matter-of-fact: “it isn’t often thim kind o’ birds comes about the mountain——”

“The mountain! Do you mean to say you shot these pheasants up the mountain?”

“It isn’t often thim kind o’ birds comes about the mountain,” said Andy, vaguely.

“You stole them out of Lord Kinsale’s coverts—I know you did.”

“Auh! To hear the like o’ that, now! Shtalin’! Was I ever afther shtalin’ whin I was out wid you, Masther Willie, on both bog and mountain, many’s and many’s the time? They’re a foine brace o’ birds, yer honor.”

There was no denying that, at all events; and Andy avoided further discussion or confession by proceeding to carry the game to the adjacent table, where he laid out the beautifully plumaged birds brace by brace, just as he used to do on the kitchen dresser at Inisheen, after Master Willie and he had come back from the mountain. And then he was invited to come and sit by the fire and light his pipe, the while the young master went and got a pint bottle of ale and a tumbler for him. It was not the first time that these two had had a chat together.

It appeared, then, from Andy’s narrative, that a gentleman of the name of Tim Sullivan, who had married Andy’s cousin Bridget, had laid under some obligation the captain of a trading smack called the *Molly Bawn*, who had offered in return to Mr. Sullivan a free passage to London—or at least to Limehouse—whenever he chose to make the trip. This Mr. Sullivan seemed to be a person of wide and ambitious views, for though he could not avail himself of this offer to see the world—owing to his wife being ill, and he having to look after the pigs—he did not wish to have it thrown away; and so he had come to Andy the Hopper and put the chance before him.

“He says to me, ‘Andy, would ye like to see London, now?’ ‘Divil a bit,’ says I; ‘but it’s Masther Willie I’d like to see. ‘Sure,’ says he, ‘’tis the great chance for ye. For what can a gentleman do in London without a sarvint?’ says he. ‘Baithershin,’ says I; ‘whose sarvint?’ ‘Whose?’ says he; ‘who but Mr. Fitzgerald?’ ‘Begor,’ says I, ‘but

'tis the devil's own cleverness ye've got, Tim Sullivan ; for who'd have thought of that, now ? ”

“ But you don't mean to say you've come all the way from Inisheen, Andy, to try your luck in London as a man servant ? ”

“ Well, Masther Willie,” said Andy, scratching his red hair with much perplexity, “ not in a gneral kind of way , but if it was yoursilf, sorr—— ”

Fitzgerald glanced round the apartment.

“ Does this look as if I needed a man-servant Andy ? ”

Now there is very little doubt that Andy the Hopper had been possessed with the conviction that Master Willie, having gone away to make his fortune, would be living in grand style ; but his notions of grandeur were vague. And in any case, was this all of the house that belonged to the young master ? Fitzgerald had gently to explain to him that these visions that Mr. Sullivan had awakened were not practical ; and he was very much pleased to hear that Andy could get a free passage back in about ten days' time, and that also one of the hands on board the smack had got him a lodgment at Limehouse. Nor was Andy so greatly disappointed. He had always been accustomed to take Master Willie's advice as something that there was no contesting ; and he quickly fell in with the notion that, now he was here, the best thing he could do was to see as much of London as he could, that he might be a great person when he got back to Inisheen.

“ How you ever got here I don't understand,” Fitzgerald said.

“ Sure, thin, your honor, 'twas one of the boys that tould me the river went all the way through the town, from ind to ind, and says he, ‘ Kape to the shtrame, and ask the people from toime to toime. ’ ’Tis iver since the morning I've been at it ; but glory be to God, I found ye at last, Masther Willie ; and that's the best part av the story they'll be wanting to hear about when I get back to Inisheen. ”

“ Well, now, Andy, begin and tell me all the news. Were there many cock about this winter ? Was my father out shooting any time ? ”

Thus invited, the little impish-looking red-haired man, sucking away at a short clay pipe the while, began to tell all that had happened since Master Willie had left Inisheen ; and very far and wide did these rambling reminiscences extend. It is impossible to say how interesting these were

to Fitzgerald; and yet on one point, the most interesting of all, Andy had nothing to say, and he dared not ask. What, indeed, could Andy know? Miss Romayne had not been back to Inisheen since she had left it shortly after his own leaving; and Andy's visits to Cork were the rarest things in his life—otherwise it is quite possible he might there have made himself familiar with the appearance of a nigger-minstrel. How could he know anything about Kitty? And yet the charm of all this news to Master Willie was that it spoke to him of the neighborhood where he and Kitty had been together.

At last this became too tantalizing.

“Andy,” says he, “do you remember the young lady that came down to Inisheen, and stayed in Widow Flanagan's house for a time?”

“Faix I do,” said Andy, with a facetious grin. “Sure I remimber well enough the poor gyurl your honor, made a fool of.”

He flushed resentfully. But how could he complain of this familiarity? He had brought it on himself by his injudicious questioning. And then, no doubt, Andy considered this a little bit of astute flattery to regard the young master as a gay Lothario.

“She did not break her heart though ye did lave her, Masther Willie, and that's throe,” he added, with another pull at the pipe.

“How do *you* know? How do *you* know anything about her?” said Fitzgerald, angrily.

“'Twas Corney Malone,” continued Andy, with the composure of indifference—for he doubtless thought this was but as another of his items of news—“was up at Cork, to see his daughter Biddy and the two boys—that's Pathrick with the squint eye and young Corney—he was afther seeing them away to Americay—and sure, your honor, that's the way wid 'em all now, and soon there'll be nobody left in the country but the gossoons and the ould women—and when he came back to Inisheen he was in the kitchen at the Impayrial, and says he, ‘Sure the foine young lady that Masther Willie was sportin' about wid hasn't broken her heart for his laving of her.’ ‘What d'ye mane, Corney?’ says I, for I was in the kitchen too—if it was not for a shnipe or two, or a mallard mebbe, how could a poor man earn his living, your honor?—and says I, ‘Corney what

d'ye mane?' 'Faix,' says he, 'tis another one now she's sportin' about wid—a young spark from Dublin.' ”

For a moment to Fitzgerald the world seemed to whirl round; a kind of blackness came before his eyes; life was slipping away from him, But the next instant there was a backward rush—of contempt and indignation.

“Who the devil told you to bring your kitchen gabble here?” he said, in a tone that made Andy drop his pipe.

Then he was deeply mortified with himself. As if it was the slightest consequence what reports might be going about Kitty in Inisheen or elsewhere! And was it not shameful that he should have allowed himself to be startled? He instantly assumed a forcedly tranquil air; and said, quite good-naturedly:—

“Well, Andy, I suppose there isn't much doing just now in Inisheen: no doubt the people about the Imperial are glad to have things to talk about, however foolish they may be——”

“Thru for you, sorr,” said Andy, contentedly; he seemed quite unaware of having caused any quick pang of dismay.

“Mr, Corney Malone has been putting a lot of nonsense in your head,” said Fitzgerald, presently. “I suppose he is vexed because the young lady did not buy any ribbons or pocket-handkerchiefs at his shop—things that he buys in Cork and sells to you Inisheen people at double the price.”

“The divil swape him!” said Andy, with heartfelt satisfaction: it was enough for him that Master Willie had declared against Corney Malone.

He invited Andy to continue his gossip but that was less interesting now. He scarcely listened. He was thinking of Kitty's letters—the very breathings of her soul. Could any one who had read these charming, inconsequent, affectionate prattlings doubt the honesty of her who had written them? It was at himself he was wondering. Why should he have felt, for even a second, this blackness of death grip his heart? It was for this, then, that she had given him the great treasure of her love—that, at the first idle tale, he should imagine it possible for her to be a common flirt? What Hilton Clarke had said, then, was true? She should not have been left alone? Perhaps she also had the “unappeasable heart”? Perhaps he was ready to believe that the little shoots of tenderness had already gone out to cling to somebody else? Thus it was that while

Andy the Hopper was giving a religiously accurate account of the sayings and doings of everybody in Inisheen, Master Willie—fighting for poor Kitty, who was so far away, was proving to himself that he had never deserved to have her love, or he would not have allowed that foolish rumor to have dealt him such a blow.

Still he wished to get out into the open air.

“Andy,” said he, looking at his watch, “I have an engagement now, but I shall be back by a quarter past seven. You can’t go away down to Limehouse to-night; you would never get there. I will see if the landlady here can get you a bed for the night somewhere; and you’ll want some supper. Wait here till I come back.”

“A word wid ye, your honor,” said Andy, anxiously. “May I make so bould as to bolt the door when your honor’s gone?”

“Oh yes, certainly. But there is no chance of the black gentleman coming back.”

It was still raining, out here in the dark night, and he put up his umbrella unconsciously; but there were not many objects he passed during his rapid walk up to Hyde Park Gardens that he noticed or could have remembered. His thoughts were far away. Why should poor Kitty have been made the subject of idle rumors like these? What could Corney Malone know of her? Corney Malone was a small shopkeeper in Inisheen; apparently he had been unable to keep his family or to procure work for them in the old country; so he had been drafting them off to America. And it was likely that, during that short visit to Cork, he should get to know anything of Miss Romaine! Even if he saw her walking with any one—which was absurd—how could he tell that the person was from Dublin? What would Kitty say when he should tell her—as he certainly should—that this bit of tittle-tattle, coming unexpectedly, had very nearly parted soul and body? He recalled that sensation with a sort of shudder. It seemed as if the world were falling away from around him, and that he was blind; and all because Corney Malone, in the back kitchen of the Imperial, had been chattering spiteful nonsense to the idlers about. Perhaps it was well for the symmetry of Mr. Malone’s features—which was not much to boast of at the best—that he was not anywhere about Fitzgerald’s neighborhood just at this present moment.

He reached Hyde Park Gardens, and set to work to

get through the hour mechanically. Fortunately that was easy; for he had brought with him a newly published volume of Arctic travel, which was exceedingly interesting, and was making much stir; and he had had time to mark the salient passages. How strange it was to read of that far white land; and to see behind it all the time the harbor and the hills of Inisheen! It was Inisheen he was thinking of, not Cork. He did not like to think of the streets of Cork. And then, all of a sudden, there sprang into his recollection a phrase in one of Kitty's letters, written long ago when she was in Dublin—"Willie, there's a man bothering me with bouquets." His face grew red. He stumbled on with his reading. But the redness of his face was caused by anger with himself that this recollection could annoy him. He had no time to argue the matter with himself; he was reading about the Arctic zone. Sometimes Mrs. Chetwynd said, "Poor fellows, how they must have enjoyed that Christmas feast!" or, "Dear me, that was a narrow escape!" and he had to read on and on, with the streets of Cork, instead of Inisheen, thrusting themselves in as a background to all his hurried, staccato, agonized thinking.

So glad he was when that hour of unimaginable torture was over, and he could rush out into the night to wrestle with the demons that were seeking to devour him. He would not face them, for he would not acknowledge their existence. He would not admit to himself that he could have any doubts of Kitty's love, her faith, and honor. He hurried on his way, persuading himself that he was sorry for Andy's waiting there alone. It was kind of Dr. Bude to have interested himself in John Ross, and to have got some friend to offer to take two more sketches. Ross must see Andy the Hopper, and make a drawing of him. Ross might make a little copy of it, and he would send that to Kitty to amuse her—to Kitty who was so lonely away up there on the hill. "Just tell them there's a poor girl in Ireland who is breaking her heart for your sake"—that was what she had written. As for any one sending her bouquets, why not? What more natural? They threw them to her on the concert stage; why not send them? She had not even seen the man. How could they know that Kitty was married already; that her vow had been registered in the unseen world; that her faithfulness had been celebrated in the great hall where

the little people sounded their silver gongs, and the care of "Catherine" was given over to them? He knew and she knew; that was enough; the outside world might go its way. "Let this be a love night," Kitty had said, down by the running water. She could scarcely be got to repeat the curse; she knew there never would be any occasion for that. And to speak of poor Kitty as having been jilted! Well, no matter. He and she knew; the little ringlets round her ears had heard their secrets, the outside world might go its way.

From these dreams, that seemed to grow brighter and brighter the faster he walked, he was awakened by his arrival at his lodging, and the necessity of supplying Andy with some supper and a bed in the neighborhood. There was no difficulty about either. At supper (John Ross could not be found, or he would have been invited to join) Andy insisted on observing the etiquette of the luncheons on the mountain. That is to say, he would wait about until the young master had finished—helping now and again to hand things as well as he knew. Then, when he had followed, and disposed of a hasty meal, he had no objection to light a pipe and chat on ordinary familiar terms.

But all the fascination had gone from Andy the Hopper's gossip. He found the young master sorely distraught; more than that, he seemed to become impatient from time to time, as though he could not bear having his thoughts disturbed.

"Sure, Masther Willie," said Andy at length, "there was nothing to vex ye in the story that Corney Malone brought back from Cork—bad luck to the omadhaun!"

"Oh, hold your tongue, Andy?" said Fitzgerald, rising and going to the window. "It is still raining. See here now. Will you be able to make your way back to Limehouse to-morrow?"

"Yerra, your honor, as I came here, I can go back."

"If there's any sun, you can make straight south till you meet the river. If there isn't, ask the nearest way. Then you'll find yourself near Chelsea pier; and the boat will take you down. Can you remember that, now?"

"Sure we'll shpake of it in the mornin, your honor," said Andy, who was very comfortable now by the fire.

"I shan't see you in the morning," said Fitzgerald, briefly. "I am going away from London for a day or two——"

“The Lord be merciful to us, Masther Willie; but is it bad news ye’ve got?”

“No, no. I am coming back in a day or two—long before the *Molly Bawn* can get in her cargo. I’ll find you out at Limehouse, and bring you back here. I’ll have your portrait painted, Andy. But where’s the jacket with the red sleeves?”

“Sure I thought if your honor wanted a sarvint, ’twasn’t the ould jacket you’d be afther wishing to have about the house. But that was the jacket that tased the bull into the bog—d’ye mind that, Masther Willie?”

“Don’t I!”

This resolution of his once taken—that, come what might, he would start by the Irish mail in the morning, and take the long journey to Cork, and seek out Kitty, just for a moment of holding her two shoulders and gazing into the beautiful, soft eyes—Andy’s gossip seemed far more bearable. What was not bearable was that, amid all the vague thoughts conjured up by this aimless talking, now and again his heart should stop short suddenly, as if there was something he dared not face. He could not banish from him the consciousness that, however he might argue himself out of foolish doubt in the daytime, in the night dark things would occupy his mind. And Kitty’s eyes were so loving they would have no reproach in them, if he went to her and asked her to help him to banish forever this ghastly nightmare. Just to take her hand for a moment—that would be enough. Was it not the hand he had held over the little stream running down to the Blackwater and the sea?

CHAPTER XVIII.

STORM AND CALM.

THIS was a strange setting out to go and see Kitty. Where was the gladness of it? Why should there be fear, and a touch of shame, and a hundred horrible distractions and suggestions, instead of the simple joyousness of the thought that soon he would have Kitty’s lovelit eyes re-

garding him? He had not slept much that night. Long before there was any need he had dressed and gone out, making his way to the station through the dark empty streets. In the cold railway carriage he sat distraught; the spectacle of the gray dawn disclosing itself over the sleeping landscape had no interest for him. He was as one in a dream.

And then sometimes he would ask himself sharp and angry questions. Supposing this rumor to be true, had he not himself to blame? Why had he ever left Cork? What had the wretched ambition to play a part in literature to do with the happiness of his life? Why had he been content to live in a fool's paradise in London, when he ought to have been by Kitty's side? Was it not his place? But he must needs go and leave her alone—she young and tender-eyed, and wandering from one town to another. How could that fool of a woman be a proper guardian for her? And what more natural that here or there some one should wish to pay Kitty some attention, she was so quick in sympathy, so gentle-hearted, with her "young eyes still wounding where they looked"?

And then again he reproached himself for entertaining for a moment the monstrous supposition that his faithful Kitty, who had sworn her love to him over the brook on that wonderful moonlit night, should encourage the attentions of any one. And how was he going to reproach her? How make an excuse for appearing in Audley Place? Should he play the spy, then? This was a strange setting out to go and see Kitty.

But when he got near to Holyhead the first glimpse of the sea made his heart leap up. Had not these gloomy fancies and forbodings been the product of a town life? The cold sea air seemed to drive them away. Of course he should meet Kitty as of old; and they would talk about Inisheen; and if the winter roads were rather too muddy for country walks, they would be quite content with the wide pavements of the town, and would be happy enough in the South Mall, or in St. Patrick Street, or the Mandyke Parade. Kitty's warm little hand would be on his arm. They would talk about their future life together. Would she look up trustingly, or look down shyly, when he told her of the quaint little house by the river with its woodwork of white and green?

He grew so hopeful that he had even time to think of

John Ross, and to wish that he also were on board this great steamer. Would not these wonders be sufficient for him? For at one moment they were slowly steaming through a fog that was suffused with a yellow sunlight, the foghorn booming and answering similar warnings from ships that were invisible—and then again they would emerge suddenly into perfectly clear space, the sea quite smooth and glassy and blue, perhaps some massive brig or heavy schooner lying motionless on the mirror-like surface with all its idle sails accurately reflected. It was a tedious crossing on the whole. Sometimes they stole out from one of these encircling fogs to find another steamer, or motionless sailing vessel, most dangerously near. But before they reached Kingstown they had left the fogs completely behind them, and the sun was shining pleasantly on the harbor and shipping and houses, as if his native country were giving him a friendly and smiling welcome.

In the long journey, moreover, away to the south he had distraction in the society of a middle-aged priest, a person of meagre aspect and of sallow complexion, who had gray eyes with black eyebrows and eyelashes. Fitzgerald very soon found that these gray eyes were capable of expressing a good deal of passionate feeling—especially anger. The priest was a perfervid politician, and his language was far from temperate. Now Fitzgerald was scarcely a politician at all. The *Cork Chronicle* had not seen fit to take the affairs of the Empire under its care. At Inisheen, again, he had generally preferred to the Tim or Pat who skulked out of the town for midnight drill (frightening the wild fowl besides) the Tim or Pat who worked contentedly at his little farm, and had a pleasant “good-morrow” for the passer-by, and knew whereabouts a hare was to be found. He had his doubts about the wonderful magic to be wrought by “Repeal,” and had a vague sort of belief that, even under the present system, an Irishman, if he condescended to work, had just as good a chance of getting on as a Scotchman or an Englishman. It will be seen that these were not very definite convictions; and this good father got himself into white heat in showing Fitzgerald how shameful it was of an Irishman to be so indifferent. Fitzgerald took no shame to himself. Politics had not been much in his way. A young man who has to earn his own living must think of that first before proceeding to look after the affairs of the country (unless, indeed,

he is the younger son of a nobleman, when he may have an opportunity of accomplishing the former at the expense of the latter), and though Fitzgerald was quite willing to listen to this impassioned clerical—and rather glad, perhaps to have the tedium of the long railway journey so relieved—it was not to be expected that he should suddenly acquire an intense interest in party strife. Indeed, it may afford an illustration of certain influences that had been at work on him to say that while the priest was denouncing the action of the government as having been the direct and obvious cause of Irish disaffection, Fitzgerald, regarding the gray eyes, was wondering whether any color or any artistic skill could convey to canvas the curious light that glowed there.

But as they drew nearer and nearer to Cork—it was now the middle of the night—neither political discussion nor artistic contemplation was sufficient to distract his mind. He scarcely heard what the good man said. He assented to anything. He was thinking of his meeting with Kitty in the morning, and his heart was heavy with fear—fear of he scarcely knew what. It was so strange that he should be afraid of meeting Kitty! Would she believe that? Would she see it? What explanation could he make?

Then he thought of her recent letters. It is true that, once or twice, she had seemed to grow despondent, and perhaps even a little bit tired of waiting; but for the most part she had written as cheerfully and kindly as ever. What reason, then, could he give for this sudden visit? Could he confess to her that he had formed suspicions of her, and that on the authority of a rumor brought by such a messenger as Andy the Hopper?

“You don’t believe my letters, then!” would she not say? “You consider I have been playing the hypocrite? My affection for you was a pretence. You can not trust what I say; you have to come over and see for yourself; it is thus you recognize the sacredness of the vow that we swore in the glen? That is the importance you yourself attach to it; that it is so slight a tie it can have melted away already; you come over to see who it is that has so soon come between us two!”

How could he withstand the reproachful look of Kitty’s eyes? How could he show to her how weak had been his faith in her? If it were so easily snapped on so slight a

strain, how could it withstand the rougher usage, the long wear and tear of the world?

But then Kitty was so honest and so kind. If he were quite frank with her, and told her that his better reason knew how groundless those fears were, and that only to show himself how absurd they were had he taken this long journey; if he were to throw himself on her mercy; if he were to say, "Kitty, laugh at me as you like, but lonely living in London has weakened my nerves, and I can't hear anything about you but my heart jumps, so here I am, just to have a look at you, and to laugh at myself, if you like, for my idle fright"—would Kitty laugh? Not she. She was too kind for that. Her warm and gentle heart had no malice in it at all. She would say: "Then look at me, Look down into my eyes. Can you find anything but love, and truth, and constancy?"

On arriving at Cork he went to the Imperial Hotel; it was between two and three in the morning. He was very tired, and he slept well. On awakening, he could not understand where he was—for a second; the next second his heart almost stood still: he had to face Kitty.

Then, if so, the sooner the better. When he went out into the wide thoroughfares on this quiet Sunday morning, they were shining just as cheerfully in the sunlight as on that former Sunday morning when his life seemed to be rejoicing within him at the thought of his climbing the steep little thoroughfare at the top of which Kitty lodged. Now he kept his eyes about him, as if people might be watching him. Would they know what had brought him to Cork? There might be a friend of Kitty's somewhere about, who would wonder to see him. Perhaps——But no; he could not consider that possible.

And yet it was wonderful to him that perhaps so late as even yesterday Kitty had been looking at these very quays and boats, and had crossed this bridge, and had been opposite yonder house. That was the interest of the scene to him. John Ross's teaching was forgotten; he was not thinking of the color of the sea, or of the greens and grays and whites of this steep little thoroughfare. He had scarcely a look for Shandon tower when he had climbed the hill; he did not notice the hoar-frost on the ground where the sun had not reached it, nor the extent of wintry landscape, with its leafless trees and hedges. He only knew that not a soul was visible along the little terrace,

and that he dared not go near the house. He must see Kitty alone, and here.

He waited and waited, walking this way and that, but not passing the house. The clock in Shandon tower over there struck half past ten; but still she did not come. Why should she? No country walks were possible now; no doubt the wet weather had left the lanes full of mud. And if she were not to stir forth at all—bright as the morning happened to be?

Then the whole aspect of the world changed; Kitty was there. The day seemed fuller and richer; delight took possession of him; he lost fear. Kitty did not see him at first; she looked abroad over the country as she came down to the little iron gate; and as she came along he noticed that she carried a prayer-book in her hand.

“Kitty!”

She looked up—with something of fear, as he thought, in her startled glance.

He seized her hands and kissed her.

“You are not glad to see me, then?” he said, cheerfully.

“Well, but — but —” she said. “But nothing has happened?”

“Nothing,” said he. “I have come to see you, that is all.”

“You have given me a great fright,” said she, and she was still a little pale. “Why did you not write to me?” What is the meaning of it?”

He was so delighted with regarding her—the pretty outline of her cheek and chin, the soft, timid blackness of her eyes, the bits of curls that were around her small ears—that he scarcely heard what she said.

“You have not altered a bit, Kitty,” said he in his gladness. “You are just as much my Kitty as ever—and ever so much nicer to look at than your portrait. It hasn’t been satisfactory, Kitty, trying to get that portrait to speak to me of an evening when I was quite alone. It looked at me, but not as you look now. But still—why do you look so—so—so— Kitty, are you not glad to see me?”

“Well, of course,” said she, but not with the greatest cordiality. “You need not have frightened me. It is a Jack-in-the-box kind of way of coming to see one. Why did you not write?”

“Well, the surprise——” He could not tell her the truth

nay, there was happily no need for him to tell her. He had looked in her eyes; that was enough.

"And the cost, too, I suppose," said she. "Do you think it is very wise, Willie to throw away money like that? I did not understand you were getting on so very well."

He stared at her in astonishment; not hurt or vexed, but simply wondering.

"Kitty, you talk as if you really were not glad that I have come to see you. You don't talk like my Kitty at all."

"Of course I am glad," she said. "But people can't always have what they like. I really don't see that it is wise to go throwing away money on these constant trips—especially in the case of people whose future doesn't look over bright."

"Constant trips, Kitty! This is the second since I went to London; and the first was eight or nine months ago——"

"But what is the use of it?"

"There is no use in it—there is no use in it, Kitty," said he, rather bewildered. "And if I thought that this was to be my reception——"

"Oh, but we are not going to quarrel," said she, with something more of her ordinary kindness in her manner. "If you have been extravagant, we must make the best of it. I am going to church; I suppose you will come with me?"

She put her hand in his arm, in the old familiar way; he could not but take it and pat it.

"I will go to church with you if you like, Kitty; but might we not have a walk and a chat instead! There must be a lot to say after such a long separation."

"We can not walk about," she said; "the roads are too wet. Besides, I told Miss Patience I was going to church. And besides," she added, with a little laugh, "we have not been quite idle in letter-writing, Willie: there can not be so very much to say."

"Oh, very well, Kitty. I will go to church with you; I don't care much where we go, so long as I am by your side. And when you have been to church, Kitty, you will be a little more gentle and civil in your manner."

"But I am gentleness and civility itself," she remonstrated. "It is you who are reckless and wild. You don't

care what any freak costs you. I believe I was mad when I engaged myself to you."

"No use saying that now, Kitty, it is past praying for."

"I suppose so."

They were on much more friendly terms now. Perhaps Kitty had only resented her having been frightened. It was quite like old times for them to be walking arm in arm; and the bell in Shandon tower was tolling, and the people were coming along the various thoroughfares to the church.

"By the way," said he, "we have never settled in what church we shall be married Kitty."

"That's being rather too particular. That's looking rather too far forward, isn't it?"

"I am not so sure about that," said he.

"You have discovered the gold mine, then? Is that what you came to tell me about, Willie?" she said, with an odd kind of smile.

But they were entering the church porch, and there was no possibility for further speech. Sitting there beside her, indeed, he did not complain of the enforced silence. To be near her was enough; to have tight hold of her hand; to hear the sweet voice join in the singing. Perhaps he did not listen too attentively to the service or the sermon. Dreams of what the world might hold for him and her together would come in from time to time. The imaginations and ambitions of youth are stimulated rather than retarded by the hushed and mysterious repose of a sacred building; the vague dim background is convenient for the painting of wonderful pictures. And it seemed to him that that beautiful future, which he could adorn and color at will, had once more and suddenly been presented to him. These horrible doubts had been left behind. They vanished when he took Kitty's hand in his. There was no need for explanation or confession; Kitty and he were together again; life had grown full again of joy and hope. And London, with its struggles and mortifications and disappointments, was also forgotten. Shandon church, with Kitty's hand in his, left him no memories of the Fulham Road. It was as if it had only been the other night that he and she pledged their vows to each other over the running stream.

When they came out again she said:—

"Now you will come and have some dinner with us Willie; and you must try and be civil to Miss Patience."

"I would rather go for a walk, Kitty," said he "We have said nothing to each other yet."

"What is there to say that we have not said before?" she answered, somewhat saucily, "or that we can't say in letters?"

"Your letters are very nice, Kitty, but they don't speak as well as your eyes."

"Oh, I assure you," she said gravely, "I am going to take my eyes with me wherever I go. Don't be afraid. I shall have my eyes as much with me when we are sitting down at the table as if we were wandering through these muddy lanes."

No, she would not be persuaded. She thought there would not even be time for a stroll down to the river-side and back. It was too cold for walking. She was rather tired.

"Tired!" said he, in amazement; "What can have tired you?"

"You are so pertinacious!" she said, with a touch of impatience. "You want to argue. You want explanations. When I tell you I am tired, isn't that enough!"

"Well, yes, it is enough," said he, gently. "And I think you must be tired."

The subtlety of this reproof reached her. She colored a little.

"I want to be kind to you, but you're always quarrelling!" she said.

And then she laughed, and looked so pretty and confused and merry all at once that he could have kissed her there and then, though all Cork might stare.

"I declare it's enough to put anybody out of temper," said she, with all her ordinary frankness and audacity. "Here am I supposed to be cultivating the greatest admiration for somebody who is away in London, working hard on my account. It is so self-denying, don't you see; and you ought to remember the absent; and all the rest of it. And all at once he turns up on a holiday trip—frightening you, to begin with; and not a word of excuse or reason."

"I have quite sufficient reason, Kitty," said he. "The delight of listening to your impertinence is quite enough."

"I am not impertinent at all; I am talking common-sense—and that's a thing you don't know much about, Master Willie. The fact is, these people at Inisheen spoiled

you. You think you should have everything you want. Now that isn't quite possible in this fine world."

"Kitty, you have been studying the *Poor Man's Annual*, or whatever the book is. You are fearfully wise this morning. This is the second time you have informed me that people can't get everything they want; and the truth of the aphorism is more remarkable than its novelty——"

"Oh, dear me, is that the way we talk in London?" said she.

"There's only one thing I want," said he, not heeding her; "and I've got it, hard and fast."

"But you need not break my fingers with your arm. I sha'n't be able to practise to-morrow. What is that in your breast pocket that hurts so?"

"That?" said he. "It would be odd if that could hurt anybody. It's your portrait, Kitty. I had a case made for it."

"Let me see it."

He took out the case and showed it her. She only looked at the outside.

"Well, I do declare! The extravagance! And this is the way we are supposed to be saving money in London—buying anything that touches our fancy, or rattling away on a holiday? That is just like you Irish people. I see more and more of it every day. You can deny yourselves nothing. You must always spend more than you've got, and then expect the government to keep you——"

"Who has been giving you lessons in political economy, Kitty?" he said, as he took the case from her and put it in another pocket. "You have become fearfully practical——"

"That's what you will never be," she said, with a little sigh—real or affected.

"I did not think you would consider that much of an extravagance," said he, "getting a nice cover for your photograph."

"But coming away over here——"

"That seems quite to distress you——"

"Oh dear no," she said—they were now going up to the door of the house, and she spoke in a more matter-of-fact way. "Perhaps I ought to be glad. It shows you can afford it."

As he entered the little passage he caught a glimpse of a female figure flying upstairs; then Kitty asked him to go

into the adjacent parlor and wait till she had put off her things; then he was left alone.

This meeting with Kitty had not been like that other meeting that he so clearly remembered. Then she had clung to him, crying; she had begged of him never to leave her again; she had offered to live on nothing rather than that he should go away from her. Now she had grown so practical; she seemed to wish him back in London; it was the cost of his visit, not the surprise and delight of it, that seemed to occupy her mind. But still, here he was in the little chamber that was so familiar; there was Kitty's piano, and the dishevelled mass of music that she never would keep in order; there were the books he had sent her (he knew better than to look whether the edges were cut; disappointments come easily enough without people hunting after them); there was the crystal paper-weight in which Kitty had put his photograph, saying the while: "Well, so long as that is before me while I am writing, I guess I shall look sharp after my grammar. I can see the scowl beginning already. '*None of your impertinence, miss. Can't you spell the English language yet? You think that is clever, do you?*' So there's a place for you, Mr. Schoolmaster Killjoy; and when I want a scolding I'll come for it."

The little maid-servant came in and laid the cloth; and then Miss Patience appeared.

Miss Patience received him with much placid civility. She seemed more mysterious and hawk-like than ever, and seemed to take it for granted that he, having been so much longer in London, should know proportionately more of the secret things going on in politics. Fitzgerald had to explain to her that he had had but little to do with politics; even the one editor he had met in London he had not seen since last he had visited Cork.

"I heard you were not succeeding," remarked Miss Patience, calmly.

"Succeeding!" he exclaimed, with a sort of start (for he had not looked at his struggles in London in that way). "Well, I have been trying many things, and it is impossible to say whether this or that may succeed. I cannot expect everything at once. There are many openings in literary and newspaper work; of course one must wait. I can't say I have either succeeded, or not succeeded."

"Ah," said Miss Patience, complacently. "That is all

so unlike commerce. Commerce is secure. Just think of sending a telegram to Odessa—a few words; you get a reply back the same day; you walk down to the Exchange and buy something; and you have earned £2000. Two thousand pounds!—with so little trouble——”

But here Kitty came in; and she had dressed so prettily and neatly! He could not help regarding her with admiring looks; and Miss Kitty was a little bit shy and conscious; and so they sat down to this middle-day dinner—London, black phantoms, and disappointments all shut out and forgotten.

“It seems to me, Kitty,” said he, lightly, “that a commercial spirit has come over this neighborhood since I was here last. You have been lecturing on political economy all the morning and now Miss Patience tells me how easy it is to make £2000 by merely sending a telegram to Odessa. It appears to me that it might be just as easy to lose £2000 by the use of the same machinery.”

Kitty glanced at Miss Patience with a sort of apprehensive look he could not understand.

“I was observing to Mr. Fitzgerald that I was sorry he had not been successful in London,” answered that lady calmly.

“And I was saying that I had neither been successful nor non-successful,” said Fitzgerald cheerfully. “Of course there are a great many things to be tried——”

“Oh, of course,” of course,” said Kitty, hastily, and with a touch of color in her face. “Of course Miss Patience meant so far only—only so far. We know that it is difficult to—to—to succeed in literature—of course Miss Patience quite understands——”

If Miss Patience understood, Fitzgerald did not. Why this embarrassment, and this talk about the advantages of commerce, and this assumption that he had tried literature in London as means of livelihood and failed?

Miss Patience said, with a gentle smile:—

“But when once you have that commercial machinery of which you speak, Mr. Fitzgerald, how nice that must be! It goes on making money for you; you can go away and see the world; your agents are enough. That must be very nice, that independence and security. The literary man, even the most successful, is in so precarious a position. A tile from a roof knocks him senseless; his means of livelihood vanish. No one else can do his work for him;

it is like an artist becoming blind; there is no machine that can go on independently of him to make money for his wife and children. Ah, there is nothing so safe as that. Commerce in a commercial country is a natural occupation. And it is so safe."

But was it so safe? argued Fitzgerald, somewhat hotly—though he scarcely knew why, for certainly commerce had never done him any harm. If it were so safe and natural and easy to make £2000 by telegraphing to Odessa, wouldn't everybody be at it? Then look at the common failures. Look at the multitude of commercial men who were living on the very edge of bankruptcy. It was all very well to have such a piece of machinery as that that had been mentioned, but what if it happened to work the wrong way? What if it came back and burst you? No doubt it was a good thing if the commercial man could lay by a provision for his wife and children; but could not the successful man of letters do that too? And as for the tile from the roof, where would the commercial man be if that hit him! Accidents were always possible. What was not possible was that life should be based on the idle calculations. And success or no success, machinery or no machinery, as for himself, he said proudly, he would rather earn the plainest living by literature than revel in all the riches that could be procured from Odessa or anywhere else.

Kitty was the peacemaker.

"Oh, yes, no doubt," said she (though she seemed anxious to get away from the subject altogether). "One would like to be what you say—I mean, it must be a great thing to be a great man of letters; but there are so few, and it must be so difficult. I am sure that all Miss Patience meant was that it must be nice to have a business going on that leaves you free and gives you no anxiety——"

"I should say there were very few of those," said he "Leave a business, and it leaves you—the proverb is common among business men themselves. You wake up some fine morning and find yourself a bankrupt."

"Ah, very well," said Kitty, with a sigh, "those at least are very well off who begin life with a fortune ready made for them, and have no anxiety about it."

"I don't know that," said he; "the enjoyment of life is work. I don't see that people who are securely rich are any the happier for it. And I should not think much of

the woman whose views of life were colored by the presence or absence of money."

This was getting more serious. Kitty said, with a pleasant laugh:—

"There is not much use in our talking about it anyway; for all the money that you and I have, Willie, or are likely to have, won't make nations fight about us. I want you to tell Miss Patience about all the people you have seen in London. And is that old lady really so nice as you say? And what part of Bantry Bay is the house you told me of, that her nephew had? I looked in a map for Boat of Garry, but could see nothing of it. I suppose it is a small place."

So there was nothing further said about the advantages of commerce over literature, or the reverse; and presently Fitzgerald found himself being drawn by the humor of the situation into giving Miss Patience such dark hints about the ways and manners of the great politicians then in power as would no doubt have astonished those much-canvassed persons. Kitty seemed greatly relieved; she listened pleasantly; content reigned over the modest banquet. And as for Fitzgerald, it was of little account to him what nonsense he talked or listened to, so long as Kitty was in the room. Miss Patience was treated with the gravest respect. From time to time he could steal a glance at Kitty's eyes.

The middle-day dinner was long over, and they had gathered round the fire, when a step was heard on the little pathway outside, and then a loud knock at the door Kitty started, and looked apprehensively at Miss Patience. There was an absolute silence; then some sounds in the passage, and presently the maid-servant appeared.

"Mr. Cobbs, miss."

Fitzgerald was fairly stupefied when he saw this young man come into the room with the air of one who was perfectly acquainted with both Kitty and Miss Patience. He had never heard a word of him. Who could he be? The next moment he found himself being introduced to the stranger; and these two regarded each other with scrutiny, though the new-comer had the advantage in calmness. He took a chair, put his hat and cane on the table, and asked Kitty if she had been to church that morning.

He was apparently about twenty or one-and-twenty; stout, rather; of middle height; with a fair complexion

and close-cropped yellow hair; he was dressed in the extreme of fashion, and his hands and feet were small. Anybody else would have said he was an ordinary-looking, good-looking, well-dressed young man, with perhaps too obvious a taste for jewelry. What Fitzgerald thought of him and of the circumstances need not be put down here.

In truth, he was too bewildered to have any clear notion of what he was thinking. But he knew that, whatever the truth of the matter, he could not openly insult Kitty by presuming that anything was wrong. He resolved to be quite courteous to this stranger. Why should not an idle young gentleman pay an afternoon call? He resolved to be quite courteous, and clinched his hand behind his back to keep him in remembrance.

Kitty, who appeared to have lost her usual self-confident, half-satirical manner, seemed extraordinarily eager to get these two to talk together. Mr. Fitzgerald had just come over from London: had Mr. Cobbs been in London recently? Both seemed inclined to talk to her or to Miss Patience, but not to each other; and the embarrassment of the situation was obviously increasing, when Fitzgerald determined to end it. He saw his poor little sweetheart frightened and troubled, and he could not have that. With much frankness he began to speak to this new-comer; and as men find politics their common ground of conversation, he asked Mr. Cobbs if he had noticed any symptoms of disaffection since his stay in the country. Now this was a friendly overture, but the young man with the fat fair face and the blank gray eyes chose to be rather uncivil. He began to say things about Ireland and the Irish, which was not quite fair, seeing that there were three English people to one Irishman. Moreover, he talked the ordinary nonsense that is talked by the well-fed, heavy-pursed Englishmen, who lays down economical laws about Ireland without any knowledge whatever of the people or of the agricultural conditions of the country. And he was a conceited creature; he liked to hear himself talk; his platitudes were dictatorial in tone.

Fitzgerald was getting wilder and wilder, but he kept his hands tightly clinched. And he would not answer this fellow at all. He spoke to these other two. He told them what he knew, what he had seen. He described the haggard denizens of the bogland, living amid ague and starvation; he described the poor devils on the hillsides, trying

to scrape a living off rocky soil not fit to support rabbits; and then, when the bit of sour bogland had been slowly reclaimed, or the potatoes beginning to do a little better in the stone wall enclosure, the agents stepping in to demand impossible rents, and the landlord, in London, or Venice or Monaco, knowing nothing about it, and caring less; and then the eviction of whole families—the shivering wretches without a bit of firewood, let alone a bit of bread. And this was the system under which you hope to get a loyal and contented peasantry! With the masses of the people believing that the landlords were leagued against them; that the law was against them; that the soldiers and the police were against them——

But indeed this is no place for full exposition of the picture that Fitzgerald drew; it is enough to say that a few minutes had been sufficient to turn the Gallio whom the priest had remonstrated with into a politician as violent as the priest himself. Moreover, his vehement declarations were now addressed to Kitty, and Kitty timidly assented. She was staring into the fire, not at all in a contemplative mood.

“But why don't they go away?” said Miss Patience.

“God help them, they are going away,” said he. “in thousands, though there's many a breaking heart leaving Queenstown Harbor. And it's the young ones that are going; and the old ones, who can do nothing, are left at home to starve.”

“Well, if they can't earn a living, they must suffer,” said the young Englishman. “If you can't live, you must die; it's the law of nature. All I know of them is that they're a set of mean, snivelling wretches, who will fawn upon you if you give them charity, and shoot you from behind a hedge the minute after.”

“Only after you have given them charity? Then I should say you were pretty safe,” was the somewhat too fierce reply.

Clearly the air was becoming surcharged, and Miss Patience prudently left the room. What astounded Fitzgerald, however, most of all was that this young stranger seemed so much at home—so familiar with the apartment and its contents, and so familiar in his manner with Kitty. He sat down to the piano and opened it as if he had been quite accustomed to do that. He overhauled the music as

if it were his own. And at last he said, as he carelessly ran his fingers up and down the keys:—

“Won’t you sing something, Miss Romayne, and let me play the accompaniment? Oh, I know what will tempt you.”

He rose and went to the other end of the room and fetched a book of music back to the piano. He opened it; played a few bars and then turned round.

“Won’t that tempt you?”

“I would rather not sing,” said Kitty, without looking up.

“Really? Oh yes, come along.”

“I would rather not sing,” said Kitty, again.

He turned to Fitzgerald, his fingers still wandering lightly over the keys.

“Do you play?” said he.

The question was innocent enough, but Fitzgerald considered it impertinent.

“No I don’t,” said he. “I don’t consider it man’s work.”

“That is because you can’t do it, I suppose,” said the other.

Now there was just a trifle too much of a sneer in this little speech. Fitzgerald rose, and passed him on the pretence of going to look out. As he passed he said, in a low and clear voice:—

“I can’t play the piano, but I can throw puppies out of the window.”

Now whether this was meant exclusively for the young gentleman’s ear or not can not be said, but at all events, as he happened to cease playing for a moment, it sounded so distinctly that Kitty must have overheard it. Fitzgerald walked on to the window, shoved his hands in his pockets, and stared out. The young gentleman, after a second or two of silence, rose from the piano, took his hat and cane, and said to Kitty, with much formal politeness:—

“Good-afternoon, Miss Romayne. I shall do myself the pleasure of calling some other time, when you are not occupied with visitors.”

He left.

“Who is that fellow?” said Fitzgerald, turning angrily from the window.

“What fellow?” said Miss Romayne, with quite as much temper. “He is a gentleman. You have no right to

insult him. He is as much entitled to civility in this house as you are. You have no right to insult him. A pretty opinion he will have taken away of you !”

“ I don't care about his opinion. I want to know what he is loing here.”

“ He called, like yourself,” said she stubbornly.

“ Called? Yes. And his calling has made your name a byword.”

Her eyes flashed.

“ Now I see. You have heard some miserable talking, and that is why you have come over so suddenly. Well, I am ready to be cross-examined. I will tell you what you want to know, if that is your purpose.”

He looked at her, and knew her mood. It was not the first of their quarrels.

“ We will take it that way,” said he coldly. “ Who is the young gentleman, if one may be permitted to ask ?”

“ You have heard his name. He belongs to a firm of merchants in Liverpool.”

“ Oh, I perceive,” exclaimed Fitzgerald, a light breaking in on him. “ That accounts for the hymns of praise in favor of commerce——”

“ I did not say a word about it,” she said, hotly. “ If you want to insult Miss Patience also, call her in. We ought all of us to have share of your politeness.”

“ But he is not looking after the machinery that turns out two thousand pounds in a few hours. He is not telegraphing to Odessa from Cork, is he ?”

“ How can I tell ?”

“ Do you know what he is doing in Cork ?”

“ He is travelling. He is on his way to Killarney.”

“ Killarney! Killarney at this time of year! And how long has he been in Cork on his way to Killarney ?”

“ How can I tell ?”

“ Some time, however ?”

“ Yes. Some time.”

“ And he has called here several times ?”

“ Yes he has ; what harm is there in that ?”

“ Oh, I did not say there was any harm——”

“ But why are you talking to me like that ?” said she, and she threw the book she was holding on to the table. “ I will not be spoken to like that. I have done nothing wrong. I will not be spoken to as if I were a child. It is

you who ought to apologize. You have insulted a friend of mine under my own roof——”

“A friend?” said he, in the same cold way. “Have we come to that, then? But I thought you were willing to have a few questions asked, that was all.”

“Yes, I am,” said she, though rather sullenly. “You can find out what you like; and then see whether you have any right to come here with your insulting suspicions.”

“Have I mentioned any suspicions?”

“You would not be here if you did not suspect me.”

“I would like to know a little more about this young gentleman, Kitty.”

“Very well.”

“Where were you introduced to him—or were you introduced to him at all?”

“I *was* introduced to him,” she said quickly, and with her cheeks burning. “I was introduced to him in Dublin.”

“In Dublin?—And so he has followed you all the way from Dublin?”

“How dare you say such a thing? He can travel where he pleases; he is well off. He may be here on business for anything I know.”

“Oh no, Kitty, not on business; he is going to Killarney in the middle of winter! And isn’t it strange that, since you’ve known him all the time since you were in Dublin, you never thought of mentioning his name in any of your letters to me?”

“I don’t see anything strange in it,” she said, pertly. “I could not mention every trifle. I wrote of the things that were of real interest to you and me.”

That phrase “you and me” rather softened him. His anger and indignation were fast oozing away. It was so pitiable to see Kitty standing before him there, with eyes cast down like a culprit.

“I should have thought,” said he, in a more gentle way—“I should have thought that anything that affected your good name would be of interest to you and me.”

“If—if anybody,” she said, with her lips becoming tremulous, “has been saying anything—anything against my good name, I did not expect it—it—it would be you, Willie.”

And here she broke into a passion of tears, and threw herself sobbing into his arms, and clung to him.

“Willie, there’s nothing wrong; I can not bear to have

you speak like that to me. You break my heart. I would rather die than have you angry with me. There was nothing wrong, Willie—there is no harm in anything I have done—he—he is only a boy—and he was so good and kind when—when they gave me a benefit—and everybody spoke so well of him——”

“But why didn’t you tell me all this before?” said he.

“It would only have worried you,” she sobbed. “You were so far away. You could not understand. But now I hate him for coming between you and me. Why should he have caused such trouble? Nobody asked him to come here——”

“Well, Kitty,” said he, taking her small head in his hands in the old way and kissing her, “I think no harm has been done; but you have been so imprudent——”

“Oh I will confess anything, if only you speak to me like that,” said she, gladly, as she looked up through her tears.

“There would have been no trouble if only you had let me know. Of course what I said about their taking away your good name was perhaps too serious. They have been talking, though; and I should not have heeded one moment what they said if only I had known beforehand——”

“I am sure don’t care what they say,” said she, taking his hand and kissing it, “so long as you don’t quarrel with me, Willie. And I ought to have known. Miss Patience told me something like this would happen. ‘But,’ I said to her, ‘surely he can’t object to any one paying us an afternoon call; there’s no harm in that.’ And if you only knew how lonesome it is for us two, Willie, sometimes, you would understand how glad we were to have an occasional visitor. Then he was very kind about the benefit; he took £20 worth of tickets—that was from me, not from the agents, so we did not lose the commission; and I have saved so much this winter that if it were only summer weather now, I’d treat you and me and Miss Patience to a trip to Killarney.”

“Kitty,” he said sharply, “that fellow is humbugging you. He is not thinking of Killarney at all. He is dawdling after you, and people have noticed it. Now for your own sake, and for mine, and for the sake of what has been between us in bygone days, you will have to be a little more—more circumspect, Kitty.”

“Oh,” said she, cheerfully, “I am willing to take any amount of scolding—that way. If only you hold me in

your arms, you can scold away. And I believe it all then. I believe I am very bad. Of course I don't believe it when you provoke me, and make me feel hurt and injured; then it's you who are in the wrong. And now you know how to make me do just as you like."

Making up a quarrel with Kitty was very nice; and it generally lasted a good long time between these two. There was a tap at the door.

"Come in," says Kitty, quickly putting a considerable distance between them.

"Please, miss, Miss Patience wants to know when ye'd be for having your tay."

"Oh, now, at once, tell her." And then she turned to Fitzgerald: "And now, Master Willie, will you help me to light the gas? And we will have the blind down; then tea; then you shall read to us 'The Battle of Ivry,' and it will be all like old times again. How odd it is," she proceeded, as she laid the cloth, "that we are always glad to have something like something that has happened to us before! I suppose in a year or two we shall be saying, 'Come along, now, and let us have tea snugly, like the old times, like the Sunday after the quarrel. And it will be better than if we had nothing to look back to.'"

"And where will *that* tea take place, Kitty?" said he

"Where, indeed?" said she, cheerfully. "Who can tell? I suppose in London."

Miss Patience came in, looking rather frightened. But she was greatly relieved to find that her two companions were on excellent terms; indeed, when they all sat down to the tea table, she had to rebuke Kitty for facetiously referring to Mr. Cobbs as the "fat boy."

"He is in an important position," said she, with some dignity. "He has it in his power to do a great deal of good. He can afford to be charitable. He has not to think of himself."

"That is fortunate, at least," said Fitzgerald, ungenerously, "for he would have little to think of, and little to do the thinking with. Now it seemed to me that he thought a great deal of himself."

"He is a very elegant-mannered young man," said Miss Patience, with precision. "He is in an enviable situation—free from care, and able to attend to others. The country needs such persons; not adventurers who make money out of their politics, but gentlemen—educated gentlemen—wh-

are above bribes, and can help to govern the country disinterestedly. He belongs to the class of men to whom we have to look for proper government——”

“God help us, then!” said Fitzgerald, inadvertently.

“And I am glad to say that his opinions on public affairs——”

“His what?”

“His opinions,” repeated Miss Patience, with dignity.

“Well, to call the ignorant prejudices of a conceited young donkey like that opinions is, at all events, courteous. But no harm is done by the existence of such creatures. They go circling about the world, aimless, placeless, with no more influence, on real politics than the pointers and setters of the United Kingdom. I dare say these young gentlemen encourage the importation of third-rate cigars from Havana; and they add greatly to the profits of the producers of bad champagne; and so there is a kind of reason for their existence.”

“He is a very nice boy, and I won’t have such things said about him,” interposed Kitty; but she was laughing, for Miss Patience looked offended.

“One thing you can’t help admiring about him,” continued Fitzgerald, talking with familiar contempt about Mr. Cobbs, as if he were some insect before them, “is his forbearance. Just fancy! Most men who could make £2000 in twenty-five minutes by remaining in Liverpool would think twice before coming away over to Cork and doing nothing. Look at that forbearance! He might affect the currency by draining such masses of gold from Odessa and elsewhere into England. Or is it his imagination that is most to be admired?”

“Willie!” Kitty said, reproachfully. “You seem to have caught up the London way of believing in nothing.”

“Oh no,” said he; “I am pursuing a philosophical investigation. I want to know which part of his character to admire the most. I think it must be imagination—or prudence?—he departed quickly.”

“I thought he behaved very well, and you abominably,” said Kitty, with her accustomed frankness. “And you have never yet apologized to me for your rudeness.”

“Well, I do now, Kitty. I shall never be so rude again before you.”

She touched his hand beneath the table.

"You shall never have occasion again," said she, in a low voice.

It was a long afternoon and evening; but no afternoon and evening was half long enough when he and Kitty were together. And Miss Patience was kind; she went away occasionally—perhaps to her politics—leaving them together in the hushed warm little parlor, all thoughts of the dark world of London shut out, and only present to them the memories of summer rambles and of moonlight walks along the coast of Inisheen. Kitty was as pleased and pretty and fascinating as ever; you would not have thought that, but a few hours before, she had been standing opposite him with her eyes flashing and her cheeks pale with anger. She was now so gentle, so winning; the touch of her warm little hand was soft as velvet.

"And must you really go away again to-morrow, Willie?" she said. She was seated on the hearthrug before the fire, her head just touching his knee.

"I must indeed. I wrote to Mrs. Chetwynd, begging her to let me off to-morrow night; and to-morrow night I shall be neither there nor here, but on the wide sea that separates us, Kitty."

"It is such a long journey to take for merely a little talk like this."

"For more than that, Kitty."

She blushed somewhat, but said nothing.

"I am coming to the station to see you off to-morrow," said she at length.

"Would you?" said he, with great delight. "Would you take the trouble?"

"The trouble!" she exclaimed. "And I am going to do more than that, if you will let me. I want to get a proper kind of luncheon for you in a little basket, because—because it is a woman's place to provide such things," said Kitty, with a trifle of self-conscious pride. "And I know what you men do: you stuff a lot of sandwiches into a piece of paper, and take them out and eat them when they are like leather."

"Not I," said he. "I have had a warning. An Academician's wife told me that sandwiches were most pernicious."

"An Academician's wife!" said Kitty. "And yet you deny you go out among those great ladies in London! Why don't you make haste, and make me a great lady, and

take me about with you, instead of gallivanting about by yourself?"

"Am I not making haste, Kitty?"

"Yes, sitting by a fire in Audley Place, and letting me stroke your hand, while you ought to be fighting tooth and nail in London, with all your armor on, careering everything down before you."

"If it was that kind of fighting, Kitty, perhaps it would be easier," said he, absently; for he was thinking of the lonely room to which he was returning, with no Kitty to sit by him on the hearthrug, and stir the fire when it was getting low.

Next morning he thought she had forgotten her promise, for it was near the time of starting, and yet no Kitty had put in an appearance. Then he saw her come quickly along, alone; and she was breathless when she reached him.

"Oh, Willie, I thought I was too late; but here is the basket, and if the pie is a little warm still, it will be cold by the time you want it. I made it myself," she said, with a laugh and a blush, "last night after you were gone——"

"Last night!" he said. "After twelve?"

"What was that, compared to your comfort?" said she, boldly. "And I thought you would like to know that my hands could do something besides—besides kissing a good-by to you. And I was up this morning by six to get it in the oven. Oh, Willie, I have had so little time," she added, breathlessly; "I could not quite get all the sawdust off the grapes, so be a little careful——"

"Oh, never mind these things," said he, for the guard was impatient. "But it is so kind of you Kitty. You are always kind. And now I am going away again—who knows for how long?"

"That depends on you," she said, with a smile; and she kissed him, and she kept waving her handkerchief until the train was quite out of sight.

He was alone in the carriage; and he was gazing out of the window, seeing nothing. His whole visit this time had been so rapid and so strange. And he was so glad to take away with him the renewed assurance of Kitty's faith and constancy and love that he could scarcely admit to himself the presence of a consciousness that it was now become more urgent than ever that he should seek to win his way in London.

The day wore on with these imaginings, until at last the base claims of hunger reminded him that he had been so ungrateful as to forget all about Kitty's parting gift. You may imagine the interest and delight with which he opened the pretty little basket, and bethought him how Kitty's own fingers had placed such and such things there for him. Indeed, a woman's hand was visible everywhere in the neatness with which everything was wrapped up and arranged. There was a small table napkin, as white as snow. The knife and fork and spoon were all brilliant; and there was a tiny tumbler along with the half-bottle of claret. There was the pie that she had waited up in the night-time to make for him; and had she dressed the salad, too? He could see no sawdust at all on the bunch of grapes. And then his eyes and thoughts wandered away altogether from the materials of the little banquet; and he thought what a pretty housewife Kitty would make, filling the rooms with light, and singing and hurrying up everybody in her fearless, independent way. And the rooms through which he saw her moving were the rooms of the little green and white house at Chelsea.

He had a beautiful night for crossing. The stars were extraordinarily brilliant. As the huge ship ploughed her way through the black waves, all the interest of the night was centred in the clear dome above, where the myriad eyes throbbed or gazed steadily. There was the resplendent Jupiter, not far from the misty Pleiades; Mars was unusually high in the heavens; Orion's jewels flashed; the great world above was lit with a million fires, while the one below was but a mournful sound of unseen water. And perhaps this young fellow sitting there on deck in the cold night (with his heart very warm with love) may have laughed to himself when he imagined what the scientific folk who came to Hyde Park Gardens would think of his way of looking at the stars. He had no anxiety to know whether there was any chloride of sodium in them. When he regarded their brilliancy he thought of Kitty's eyes; their patient reappearance night after night, year after year, only reminded him of Kitty's faithfulness; and the far-reaching and luminous heavens themselves seemed really to belong to Inisheen, and to him, and to her, and to their secret walks along the shores in the nights gone by.

CHAPTER XIX.

A PROSPECT.

THE first thing that Fitzgerald did on returning to London was to hunt up Andy the Hopper, and transfer him from Limehouse to the Fulham Road; and during these next few days, while Andy hung about and acted as general servant as well as he could, and while John Ross and his neighbor made successive experiments with the wild fowl and game that had come from the south of Ireland, things went cheerfully enough. The woodcock were Inisheen woodcock, and he was proud that Ross approved of them highly. Then he took Andy to see one or two of the sights of London; but Andy was somewhat of a failure. He merely gaped. Fitzgerald (so desperate was his need) thought he might induce some editor to accept a paper descriptive of a wild Irishman's first impressions of the great city; but he could not make much out of the staring eyes, the open mouth, and the occasional muttered exclamation which were the only evidences of Andy's amazement."

At last, when Andy was going away, Fitzgerald said to him.

"Look here, Andy, I have a word for you."

"Av ye plase, sir."

"You may as well know that I am going to marry the young lady who was at Inisheen that time you remember."

"Baithershins, Masther Willie!" exclaimed Andy, with a vast and capacious grin. "'Twas the divil's own diversion for ye to go sporting about with the gyurl, and thin to go and lave her like that——"

"Hold your tongue or I'll pitch you down the stair," said Fitzgerald, angrily; and Andy's face changed instantly, for he perceived that this was no joke at all.

"Is it thrue, Masther Willie?" said he, with great concern.

"It is true. She is going to be my wife; now you know."

"'Tis the proud gyurl she'll be, thin!" said Andy. "Oh, didn't I suspect that same now, for all the jokin'?' 'Sure,' I said, 'Masther Willie wouldn't be afther takin

the throuble to walk about wid the English young lady if 'twasn't a coortin'?' Oh, the beautiful young crayture, now! Sure a purtier young lady ye wouldn't find betwixt the Blackwater and the Shannon. She's the flower o' fay-males, and that's throe."

"The what?"

Andy glanced at the young master anxiously

"'Tis what they say in poethry," said he, with some hesitation.

"Well, attend to me, Andy. There has been some gossiping going on in Inisheen, I gather. Well, now, attend to this: the first that you hear say anything about that young lady, you take your hopping-pole and lay it over his head. Do you understand that, now?"

"Faix, it might be my own head I'd have to break, thin," said Andy. "For wasn't it meself that brought the story of what Corney Malone—the divil swape him!—was saying? But sure, Masther Willie, when they know you're going to marry the young lady—the beautiful crayture she is!—do ye think they'd be afther saying anything more?" Then Andy, after a second, added, valiantly: "No matther, Masther Willie; if the laping pole will do, 'tis at your sarvice; and divil the man or boy in Inisheen has a head so thick that it won't break—glory be to God!"

But Fitzgerald also knew that there would be no more gossiping after this authoritative announcement; and why should it not be known that he was going to marry Kitty?

So Andy went away back to Ireland; and the days passed; and spring came in mild and humid weather to Chelsea; and the old hard fight was continued, now with illusive hopes, now with keen disappointments, always with a terrible anxiety. For that was what he had definitely brought away with him from Cork—a haunting consciousness that it was necessary he should get on at once. And how could he bring editors to understand that? They knew nothing about Inisheen. They would keep his MSS. for indefinite periods; sometimes return them after the subject of which they treated had passed from the public mind. For Fitzgerald, having brought his burlesque of pot-house politics to an end, had begun to try his hand at real politics; but the difficulty was to get an opening for these carefully prepared articles of his. More than once the conductor of a journal took the trouble to write to him in re-

turning one of these, to explain that he approved of it, and might have used it in his paper but that all such subjects were treated by the regular members of his staff, which at the moment was full. Fitzgerald found most encouragement from the projectors of new magazines, who were prepared to put him on their staff at once; but as his payment in most cases was to be contingent on some future share of profits the arrangement did not seem satisfactory. By some extraordinary chance, which he himself could scarcely understand, he got one article inserted in the monthly magazine which at that time was far and away ahead of all its fellows; and as his name was attached, he had at least the pride of sending it to Kitty. But his subsequent efforts in that direction only resulted in heartrending delay and disappointment. In short, he had to learn, as many an unfortunate wretch has had to learn, and will have to learn, that fugitive writing of this kind is valueless as a means of living.

"Ye are trying too much, laddie," said John Ross to him one evening when they were having a smoke together in the hollow-sounding studio. "Ye are writing about everything in the universe. Is it politics or leeterature ye're after?"

"I don't know," said Fitzgerald. "What I do know is that I ought to have been learning shorthand when I was shooting snipe. Then I could have got on in newspaper work by the usual stages. Now I can't get my foot on the first rung of the ladder—unless it's the treadmill: that's the only occupation in this country that you can get hold of without any introduction or training. Oh, of course, what I should like would be literature," he added, remembering the dreams with which he had set out for London. "But I don't see any permanent work in that. What they seem to like best is my verses; and these you can't manufacture at will. I have once or twice tried writing a novel. That is no use: I found myself imitating somebody else in spite of myself. No, the only constant occupation for a writing man I see is newspaper work, and all the newspaper offices are full. Never mind," said he, cheerfully, as he struck another match, "I can live. I can always earn my living as a gamekeeper. Perhaps it was too cheeky of me to come away from Cork and attempt to fight my way, single-handed, in London literature. I had no introductions, no influence. I got some help at the

beginning; but I had to pay for that pretty heavily. Well, I have not quite given in yet. I mean still to try for a time. And then, if I am beaten—well, I shall have had the experience; that is something."

He had been talking very contentedly and even cheerfully; but now a slight shadow seemed to come over the square forehead and the clear and thoughtful eyes.

"Life would be a simple matter—it would be easy enough," said he, "if one had only one's self to consider. But it is different when you have to ask some one else for the sacrifice of expectations."

Ross glanced at him.

"That depends on the young lass herself," said he; "that depends on what *she* is like."

Fitzgerald was too deeply occupied to resent the imputation or inference.

"Ross," said he, eagerly, "you've never told me what you think about women. You've talked about everything else in the world, I believe, except that."

The other laughed.

"What I think about women?" said he. "The laddie's cracked. What chance has any man o' forming a judgment on the half o' the human race? Ye may get to know two women, or three women, or maybe even half a dozen women, in the whole course of your life; and ye're well off if they happen to be decent sort o' creatures, for its from them ye are likely to form your opeenion o' the whole lot."

"You remember me telling you about Hilton Clarke?"

"I remember the meeserable wretch," said Ross, plainly.

"Oh, but I bear him no grudge," said Fitzgerald. "At least, not for the money part of the business. I don't believe he meant to swindle anybody. It was merely that he was lacking in a kind of sixth sense that keeps most people straight about money. I dare say, if he had money tomorrow, and I wanted it, he would let me have it."

"I dare say he would do nothing of the kind," said Ross, severely. "And the sixth sense ye speak of—do ye mean common honesty?"

"Well, it isn't that that I remember against him; but he had a most pernicious habit of putting things into your head——"

"Put them out again, then, for God's sake. Would ye listen to the teaching of a man like that?"

"But it is not so easy to put them out. You keep

asking yourself whether his theories are true or not; and then life is so much of a mystery; and people who are older than you yourself are must have had so much more experience of human nature——”

“That ye should believe them? No. I say no!” John Ross said; and whatever he did say he said emphatically, even if it involved the knocking off the head of his pipe. “I say no. I say, ask first of all with what sort of spectacles they have been looking at human nature.”

“For example,” said Fitzgerald—but why did he avert his eyes, and pretend to be busy with the stove, to hide his shamefacedness?—“he had a theory, or a conviction rather, that there were many women who were really too affectionate—too kind and generous—who really could not help falling in love with anybody who was near them. He said they would keep quite faithful and true so long as you were beside them; but in absence they could not help letting their tenderness of heart begin to suggest possibilities; until, perhaps before they quite knew themselves, they grew fonder and fonder of the new-comer; and then you see what the world would call the breaking of a troth: heartlessness, or something like that, had really come about because the woman had too much kindness and affection in her nature——”

“What kind of a woman do ye call that?” said Ross, with harsh contempt. “What kind of affection do ye call that? I call it the affection that exists between rabbits. God be thanked, that’s no the kind o’ women I have met——”

“Then you don’t think there are such women?” said Fitzgerald, eagerly, and he raised his head at last—“women whose excess of kindness would always be keeping one in anxiety? You think that was merely a fantastic theory?”

“I mind one poor lass,” said Ross, absently, “that had too much love in her heart; but that was not the way it went. A winsome bit lassie she was; so jimp and neat and blithe; and I think half the laddies in the school where I was at Beith were head over ears in love with her; and mony’s the sair fight there was amongst us about her. She was to be married to a young fellow—a sailor-lad he was, I think—though she was but sixteen or seventeen; and what must he do one night at Greenock but get fuddled, and go out capering in a boat in one of the docks, and get

drownel in the dark. The poor lass never held up her head. She had some money, too; for her father had left her some bits of cottages at Beith; and many a one came after her; but she had not a word for any of them. She just dwindled away—though she had been as healthy a lass as any in the parish; and in three or four years' time they put her in the kirkyard; and though folk say that nobody ever dies o' a broken heart, I do not know what else it was that Jean Shaw died o'. Ay, that was one. Then there were two more—I may say three—that never married because they could not get the man they wanted. That's four—a good number in one man's experience. Oh, but I've known the other side too—young lasses changing their mind—giddy creatures, for the most part, wanting to cut a dash with more money than their first sweetheart had. And there's one," said he, with a grim smile, "that I would like to know more about now. She was in a place in Glasgow—I mean she was a servant lass—and her sweetheart was a working plumber—a roaring, swearing, drunken sort o' fellow. Then she must needs take up with some shopkeeper laddie, as being more genteel, d'ye see; and there was some quarrelling, until the plumber got hold o' the young fellow, and smashed him almost into bits. That was a seven years' business for him. So as soon as he was safe out o' the way, she married the shopkeeper; and no doubt everything went well until the seven years began to come down to six and five and four and three. The last I heard was that the husband and wife were living in daily fear o' their lives; for the plumber was soon to be out, and he had sworn to murder the pair o' them. Man," said Ross, bringing down his fist on his knee, "why dinna you leeterary people go where ye can see human passion in the rough, where ye can see the real tragedy of life? That is no among the fine people—the nobelity; for there money lets an ill-assorted couple go different ways: and at the worst, if the wife goes to the bad, the husband is too much of a philosopher to bother himself into a rage about it, for he has run through all the experiences of life long before he ever got married. And it's no among the middle classes; they are too well-conducted and circumspect; they fear the talk o' their church-going and chapel-going neighbors. No, it's among the lower, or even the lowest, classes, that the passions are simple and intense. When the woman is faithless, the man murders her, or tries to, regardless of subse

quences. Starvation, the madness o' drink, the pitiableness o' the weak, the fight for bread—these are the the things that show ye what the struggles, the passions, the bigness, the littleness, o' human nature are. Leave your books, man, and yet out to Bermondsey, or Spitalfields, or Shadwell, and study the men and women there——”

“Oh, I am not a dramatist,” said Fitzgerald. “Besides I think you are quite mistaken.” Ross was continually dogmatising about his own profession; why should not he about his? “You may find brute force there, and violent jealousy; anything else you may take with you. And when you begin planting your literary theories—your noble sentiments that are the product of refinement—into that course soil, the crop is merely affectation. The bully, who suddenly bursts out crying when he hears a canary is a mere sham—unless he is drunk, when he would probably get up and strangle the canary. Passion in the rough? Yes, the rough sometimes has a good deal of passion—when he kicks his mother. Thank you; but before I go and try to paint a picture of the costermonger—with a pewter pot in his hand and love and innocence in his heart—I shall wait to see what effect a course of lectures on limelight will have on him.”

Ross regarded him for a second.

“Ye're a deep young fellow,” he said, “for all your frank face. Or is it pride? I'm afraid the young lady up there and you don't get on very well together.”

“Oh, I think she means to be very civil to me. I think, from little suggestions, that she has been talking to her aunt about sending me over as bailiff to an estate they have at Bantry. Well, I don't wonder at it. My present post is rather too much of a sinecure.”

“Other people manage to live on sinecures happily enouch,” said Ross, bluntly. “I wish to Heaven I had half a dozen o' them!”

“And then,” continued Fitzgerald, with some telltale color in his face, “the other people about that house are all such hard working people—I mean those you sometimes meet by chance—that one feels such an idler. I do believe at this minute,” he said, in desperation, “if they were to give me a decent salary as bailiff at that farm, I'd take it, and have done with literature. I can enjoy literature without trying to make any; and I should be in my own element over there. But what were we talking about?” He

pretended to make a cast back. "Oh yes; about Hilton Clarke's theories about women. Well, here are other two women—these Chetwynds—who, I am sure, are perfectly honest and upright and believable. My experience has not been very great; I can scarcely remember my mother, and I had no sisters. But most of the women I have been more or less acquainted with have been, as it seemed to me a good deal better and more honest and more unselfish than the men; and—and in short you wouldn't be inclined to doubt your own experiences even when a man who has seen more of the world than you have tries to make you less believing?"

"I would send him to the devil," said Ross, decisively. "Believe in the honesty of men and women, and in the wise providence and justice o' things, as long as ye can; and when ye can not, put it down to your personal bad luck, and dinna accuse everybody of stealing because the majority o' the folk ye have met have disappointed ye. The truth is ye are anxious about that young lass in Ireland."

Fitzgerald started, and was inclined to be angry. But what was the use? His friend had guessed the truth, much as Fitzgerald had tried to conceal it from him, and also from himself. Yes, he was anxious; it had come to that.

"Is she a braw lass?"

"I think you mean handsome? No, she is not imposing if that is what you mean. But she is exceedingly pretty. I can talk to you about her with impunity, for you don't know her name. She is very pretty, and very winning, and tender-hearted, and clever too. Think of her being content to wait on and on like this, while I am floundering about without any certain prospects whatever!"

"Content to wait!" exclaimed Ross. "Goodness me, what would be the worth of her if she were not content to wait! A fine kind of lass to have that would be! And ye have two pounds a week as a certainty, with constant small addections? Get her over, man, and marry her. Two pounds a week! The great majority of the human race live on far less; and what is good for the muckle is no bad for the pickle."

This bold and sudden challenge startled him; but was not the wild project as beautiful as it was wild? The thought of it! What if Kitty were really to consent? They could take a couple of small rooms somewhere, and work and wait in patience, with love and blessed content

their constant companions, until the happier time came. Would it not be fine in after-life, when things had gone well with them, to be able to talk of their early struggle, and of their adventures and their fears and hopes? Kitty's letters had not been very cheerful of late: might not this sudden challenge deliver her from the bond of despondency?

But he dared not make so fateful a proposal without much anxious care; and, as it turned out, on the very next evening something happened that promised to aid him most materially. When he had got through his appointed hour, and had risen to leave, Mrs. Chetwynd said to him—obviously with a little embarrassment:—

“Mr. Fitzgerald, I—I want to explain something. You know you are on such friendly terms with us—at least I hope so—I hope you feel quite at home in the house—it is rather difficult to speak about money matters. But they have to be spoken about; for every one must live, I suppose. And—and, in fact, Mary was saying that a great deal more of your time was being occupied than appeared to be the case——”

“Oh, I hope you won't speak of it,” said he. “My time is not so valuable.”

“Everybody's time is valuable,” said the old lady, with a smile, “for it is easy to make it so. Mary was saying you must spend a great deal of time in looking over these new books——”

“That is a pleasure to myself.”

“Now, Mr. Fitzgerald, is it fair? I have a frightful task to get through with, and you won't let me alone. If Mr. Scobell were in England, I should have asked him. However, here is the truth; that my conscience won't allow me to occupy so much of your time on the present terms, and I propose to make a difference. If,” said she, rather hesitatingly—“if you would kindly take that envelope with you, you will find in it the arrears—a small sum, but my conscience will be clear—and now, not another word—for I've got through with it, and I am quite happy. Now good-night, and not a word.”

“Not of thanks?” said he.

“No; good-night; go away,” said the old lady, with a light little laugh: she was clearly very well pleased to have got it over.

In this open and unaddressed envelope he found a check, drawn out in Mary Chetwynd's clear and precise hand and

signed by her aunt, for £65. The rapidest of calculations showed him what this meant. He was to have two hundred a year, then, instead of one! The vision that this opened up left no room for those over-sensitive perplexities that he had laid before his friend Ross. His heart was beating too quickly. The question was, what argument, what entreaties, what pretty phrases, would bring Kitty to him from over the sea.

He walked rapidly, he knew not whither. The darkness was pleasant. Never had he struggled so with the composition of any leading article affecting the interests of India, or China or Peru. He tried to meet beforehand every possible objection. He thought of all the nice things he could say to win her consent. At what hour he got home to his lodgings he did not quite know; but that important letter was yet far from being arranged.

It took him, indeed, the whole night to write it; destroying numberless copies that seemed to him to leave a loophole of escape here or there. He felt that Kitty's letters had been somewhat cold and matter-of-fact of late; he was afraid she might judge this one coldly; he had to make everything safe, so that she should feel the future was absolutely secure. And when at last he did go out to post this letter at the nearest pillar letter-box, behold! the wan gray light of daybreak was stealing over the skies, and far away there was the rumble of the first of the carts.

I do not know who was the Postmaster-General at that precise time, but have no doubt that when Fitzgerald dropped the heavy letter under the metal lid, he was as impatient with him as Juliet was with her nurse.

“Love's heralds should be thoughts,
Which ten times faster glide than the sun's beams,
Driving back shadows over low'ring hills :
Therefore do nimble-pinioned doves draw love,
And therefore hath the wind-swift Cupid wings.
Now is the sun upon the highest hill
Of this day's journey——”

Well, the sun was not yet quite so high; but it was slowly spreading abroad its beams, and the world of London was awaking. Fitzgerald was in no humor for sleep; he thought he would rather go away down to the river to have a look at a little green and white house there; and there was a light as of the dawn on his face.

CHAPTER XX.

SOME CORRESPONDENCE.

YES ; there was no doubt of it ; during the months that had elapsed since his hurried visit to Cork, Kitty's letters had grown much more cold, or at least, much more reserved and matter-of-fact, while now and again there was a tone of disappointment running through them which he had striven to overlook at the moment. Now, as he re-read them with this glorious prospect—this near and shining future—before him he sought for reasonable explanations and excuses, and easily found them. The spring had been wet and boisterous, and Kitty's spirits were readily affected by the weather and its discomforts. Then she had had a good deal of travelling ; and that would account for the curtness of some of the notes, Kitty being ordinarily a most profuse letter-writer. And then again the news that he had had it in his power to send her was not of the most cheering description, though he had tried to put the best face possible on matters. Altogether, looking over these letters again, and regarding them by this new light, he could find nothing disquieting in them ; on the contrary, they were quite natural in the circumstances : the question was, How would Kitty write now ?

He could not doubt how she would answer his appeal. The summer was coming on, with all its beautiful new hopes, new desires, new possibilities. During that winter Kitty had again and again, and not at all to his sorrow, pretty plainly hinted that she was dissatisfied with her present way of living. It had become distressingly monotonous. There were no ambitious hopes to lure her on. Only once had she expressed herself as being pleased with her surroundings ; and that was on a professional visit to Dublin, where, instead of having to go to the usual lodgings, she had been the guest, along with Miss Patience, of the wife of the manager of a theatre there ; and that lady had introduced Kitty to a number of people, and made her life a little more cheerful for her for a time. Then she had to return to the provinces, and to miserable rooms, and the fatigues of travelling ; and as the weather happened to be

the places in the photographs in the windows ; but neither they, nor the panorama, nor anything else, could have told me of the charm of this beautiful neighborhood. We were out last night in a boat ; there was no moon ; but the stars were *lovely*. We rowed to Innisfallen ; and I sung one or two songs—the sound was so strange when we got near the island ! I was wondering whether the ghosts in the Abbey would hear. What a beautiful night it was !

“Of course you are asking what brought me here. Well, dear Willie, I have had a great deal of bother, and some hard work of late ; and I thought I had earned a little holiday ; and everybody said we ought to go to Killarney in the spring ; and Miss Patience and I have done it as cheaply as we could. Where in the world could we have come to for such perfect peace and rest ? This hotel is nearly empty ; when we went to Muckross Abbey and the Torc Cascade and all round there, we were quite by ourselves, and when we go out on the lake there are no *tourists* anywhere. The day we arrived, however, there was a fearful tempest. I said to myself, Goodness gracious ! is this Killarney ? I thought Killarney was always quite still, with moonlight on it (as it was in the panoramâ). The wind and the rain were dreadful : the mountains were quite black except when the clouds crossed and hid them ; and the waves on the lake smashed on the rocks at Innisfallen, and sprung up in foam just like the sea. But now everything is quiet and lovely ; and I feel as if this was the Vale of Avoca that I should like to rest in, with the friends I love best ; only I suppose there never is rest like that for everybody ; trouble is the policeman that steps in and orders you to move on.

“Dear Willie, I feel quite afraid to begin and try to answer your letter ; for I know you won't understand what I mean about it. I entirely agree with you about a private life—it has been the wish of my heart for many a day ; I am quite tired of the annoyances of my *public* one. People think it is a fine easy thing to earn your living by merely singing songs ; I wish they knew what hard work and uncertain work it is. Of course one's vanity is pleased sometimes, when you have nice things said to you, or when the audience is very enthusiastic ; but what a temporary thing that is ! When I stayed with Mrs. Milroy in Dublin I was quite delighted with the little occupations and visits and amusements with which they passed the time ; and I know

that would suit me; and as for your suggestion that I might some day regret giving up this kind of life, you might have saved yourself all the arguing against it: it is the last thing, I *know*, that will ever occur to me; and I should be ready this minute to give it up, if I could do so safely.

“ People never do get what they want, I suppose; and I suppose it is better for them in the long-run. And for you to think, just now, when you are making a path for yourself that will lead to future fame, of hampering yourself in the way you propose—well, I can understand your dreaming of it, for you were always so romantic and strange in your notions, but I have got worldly wisdom enough for both of us, and I can see what a pity it would be. When you want a clear way for your genius, you tie all this domestic anxiety round your neck! Consider how precarious you would be. That old lady might die at any moment, and then—! I am afraid, dear Willie, that your literary prospects by themselves wouldn't warrant you in doing as you propose; and do you know I, for one, am not so sorry there should be such difficulty and hard work, for if there was not, wouldn't everybody be at it, and where would be the glory of making a name for yourself, if everybody could step in and do it? I know you distrust your powers. I don't; and I should think myself mean and unscrupulous if I allowed my private wishes to interfere with your future. I know some day you will have reason to thank me. Was it not me who sent you away from that miserable little office in Cork to take the place that your genius entitles you to? I as good as said:

‘ Go where the glory waits thee,
But while Fame elates thee,
Oh! still remember me!
When the praise thou meetest
To thine ear is sweetest,
Oh! then remember me!’

I know you always laugh at my poetry; but I like poetry that one can understand, that has common-sense in it; and there is common-sense in that. I expect great things of you; and so would the world if it knew as much as I did; and it seems to me that, with gifts such as yours, you have no right to throw up your career, or at least seriously hamper it, for the mere gratification of a piece of romance. But that was always like you, Willie. You look at things

in such a strange way. You don't seem to value things as other people do; and you don't appear to consider it is your duty to get on in the world, and make money, and a security for your old age. I have seen a good deal of the world; I have seen what money can do; what good you can do with it; how independent it makes you. I believe if it had not been for me you would have kept on in Cork, simply because you had the chance of living a half-sailor, half-gamekeeper life at Inisheen; and you would never have thought of the time when you would no longer be able to go after rock-pigeons. And so, dear Willie, you must try and be a little less romantic in the mean time, and do justice to the gifts you have; and by and by you will thank me, and say that everything has been for the best.

“Now I know you have quite misunderstood me; and you are angry, in your wild way, and accuse me of being mercenary—me! I have never had enough money to know what mercenariness was. And of course you are impatient that everything can't come about just as if it were a story-book. Alas! I wish it could, and everybody be satisfied; but there is always trouble, even to those who make the strongest fight against the inclinations of their heart, and try to do what is best for every one around them. Just imagine me lecturing you like this! And yet you know dear Willie, that you are too poetical; and so I must be the commonplace person—even here, with Killarney before me. There was a dreadful accident to the coach as we were coming. There is a steep hill some miles before you get here, and one of the two horses fell, and the force of the coach dragged it along, and the poor beast's knees were horrible to look at. It just managed to walk the distance, though I thought every moment it would go down. But what a fine thing it must be to have a carriage and one's own horses, and drive all through these beautiful places, quite at your leisure, and without a thought for the future! Just fancy not having to care a farthing whether June or August is near or far off; nothing but to enjoy the present moment, and drive from one hotel to another, irrespective of time and without a thought about the cost! I think people who can have such happiness to themselves ought to be very kind to other people. I know I should try to be. I can imagine myself driving through the country like that; and if there was any trouble, it would be the thought that I could not make all the poor people

one might meet just as contented as one's self. One might meet, who knows, some young fellow going away from his sweetheart, *forced by fate*, and very much troubled about his prospects; and a letter of introduction or something might save misery. But these are all idle dreams; and one must take the world as it is.

—“I am so glad that that kind old lady has again befriended you; and hope that something *substantial* and *permanent* may come of her friendship for you; but even if these hopes are disappointed, I am convinced you did right in going away to London. Genius such as yours is a trust. You had no right to waste your time fishing and boating and shooting. Even if it were to be decided by fate that you and I were never to meet again, do you not think I should watch your career, of which I am far more certain than you are? Of course I don't say that success is to come all at once. I do believe you are working your best; though I didn't think from what you say that that Scotch artist—I thought the Scotch were so practical!—does you any good. I suppose he thinks it would be romantic to live in a *garret*: and if I was a *barefoot lassie* perhaps it would; but now again you will accuse me of mercenariness just because I have to talk common sense. I don't believe there's anybody in the world cares less for money than I do; but I see what money can do, and how it gives people time to be thoughtful and kind to those around them; and in any case I am not going to be the one to wreck such a career as you have before you, Scotchman or no Scotchman.

“I have been so much occupied here that I forget whether I thanked you for the volume of political speeches that you sent Miss Patience; but at all events I was asked, and intended to do so, with her best compliments. The book seems to be highly appreciated; she has scarcely stirred out since we came here. As for our stay here, that is quite uncertain; but I am in love with the scenery (it is far prettier and not as grand or wild as I expected, and you know I prefer quietness to Alpine terrors) and I shall tear myself away with great regret. We make our way on to Limerick, where I have four concerts—the old mill-wheel again after this paradise! So, dear Willie, you need not write here, if you are writing, but to the Post-office, Limerick, and I shall expect a letter saying that you know I am acting in the best kindness, and laying myself open to the

charge of being a money-grasping young woman (which is absurd, you know, for if I was, where is there any to grasp?), when all I want is to act prudently for you and me. Good by, dear Willie. If there's any one wishes you a speedily secure position and great fame and reputation such as you deserve, there's no one wishes that more heartily than,

“Your affectionate KIRTY.

P. S—*Thursday Morning.* Dearest Willie, this letter does read so business-like that I am ashamed of it; and yet I can't burn it, and have to go over all the arguments again. It quite wore out my small brain last night; and there were such difficulties, too—such interruptions—that it seems all confused. I meant it to be so kind, and it reads like a schoolbook. Never mind Willie: you know I am not mercenary; and that no one wishes you to get on more heartily than I do. I meant the letter to be *very kind indeed*; and at least you will be pleased that I am delighted with Killarney. Good by. The morning is lovely; and we are just going out for a row.”

“Going out for a row?” he repeated mechanically to himself. Who were going out for a row? Miss Patience, according to Kitty's own showing, scarcely stirred out of the hotel at all. And what were they doing there? How had he heard nothing about it? What did all this mean—about the trouble of the world, and the sacrifices of one's inclinations, and a future for him of which she was to be the distant spectator? He read the letter over again, in a bewildered sort of way. It was not like Kitty—it was not like the wilful, petulant, loving, and teasing Kitty at all. It is true that her letters had for some time past been reserved—occasionally hurried and curt; but here was a long rambling letter laying bare all her thoughts, and it did not sound as if it was Kitty who was speaking. And was she laying bare all her thoughts? he asked himself. Was it her great regard for his future fame that caused her to refuse his appeal?—an appeal that seemed to him to be so simple and natural and opportune.

Then he eagerly grasped at the notion that perhaps his abrupt proposal had startled her. This was but maiden coyness. She had been alarmed by the definite request that she should come over and be married, and occupy these humble apartments until a more suitable dwelling could be

chosen. These rambling arguments of hers were a mere girlish trick of fence. Modesty was sheltering itself behind the guise of prudence. And he could have laughed at Kitty's imploring him to believe that she was not mercenary—as if it were likely he could suspect her of that.

Still, there was something very strange and disquieting in the tone of this letter; and when he sat down to answer, he experienced the novel sensation of being afraid. Afraid of Kitty? If he could have caught her by both hands, he would not have been afraid. But that was the mischief of it—the great distance between them. That was why he was afraid—afraid of the misunderstanding that letters cause. He wrote hurriedly; he seemed to have so much to say; and wished to say it all at once; and, moreover, he must needs write in good spirits if he would drive away her despondency.

“MY DARLING KITTY,—I have received your extraordinary letter. It does not sound as if you had written it at all. Why are you so serious? What has frightened you? Are you the same Kitty that, when I first came to London, used to write every day, nearly, ‘Make haste; make haste: for I love you so’? And now there is not a word of love in this long letter, but a great deal of down heartedness, and fear, and political economy, and Benjamin Franklin sort of wisdom. And, then, my pretty-eyed philosopher, your facts are a little askew. You accuse me of being too poetical; and if to love you is to be romantic and poetical, I will admit the charge. But if you mean that I allow poetry or anything else to interfere with my care for the future, you are all wrong. You don't know how rigidly I've saved up every possible penny since I came to London. I don't go taking holidays at Killarney; when I have to go for a journey, it's all because of a wicked young woman who won't be reasonable and sensible, and come and be married at once. And really and seriously, Kitty, what have you to fear? I have £110 saved; and £200 a year is quite enough to make a start with, in a quiet way, and if things go better, won't you be rather glad in after-life that you and I were together during the poorer times? You talk about my being precarious (your English, Miss Kitty, has not been improved by the Killarney air), but is not everything and everybody more or less so? You are like Miss Patience, thinking that literature is so

precarious a profession because a tile might fall on your head from a roof. No doubt this old lady might die, but so might you or I; and surely, since life is so uncertain, common sense would counsel you to make the best of it while you may. Life is not such a very long thing; youth is still shorter; and surely when two people love each other, and have a little faith in the future, and a reasonable security in the present, even Benjamin Franklin, Poor Richard, Catharine Romaine, and similar philosophers might admit that it would be unwise to throw away a certain happiness on the chance of some good to come. It seems so strange to have to talk to you like this, Kitty, even as a joke. I can scarcely believe this letter of yours to be serious. Who was it who declared that she could live on nothing; who implored me never to leave her: who asked me to live in her heart, and pay no rent? And all that happened little more than a year ago. What has changed her so in so short a time.

“I know. They say that once in every seven years, on a beautiful summer morning just at sunrise, the O’Donoghue of the Lakes comes down from his magic home in the mountains, riding a white horse, and accompanied by fairies. He rides across Lough Leane, and wherever he goes on the dry land all his old possessions and splendor appear again; and when he has seen that everything is right he sets out for home again. Now no doubt you have heard that, if you have courage enough, you can go with him, and cross Lough Leane dry-shod, and accompany him to his home in the mountains, where, before bidding you good-by, he will present you with part of his buried treasure. Have I found you out, Miss Kitty? Are you watching for the O’Donoghue of the Lakes? Is that why your small head is stuffed with ‘mercenariness?’ Are you so anxious to be rich, and drive through the country with a carriage and pair, that you get up every morning at that hotel before sunrise and wander away down to the lakeside, and look across and watch for the white horse and its rider? Is that the peculiar charm you have found in Kilarney? And of course the want of sleep, and the going about so much alone, and the witchery of the whole thing, have dazed you a little, and made you apprehensive, so that I can scarcely believe it is you who are speaking to me.

“My dearest Kitty, you must really throw aside these unreasonable fears—you, who used to be so fearless, too!

If you are afraid to take such a decisive step as coming to London by yourself, I will come over and fetch you. I am entitled to a long holiday. Dearest Kitty, how would it do for me to come over and meet you at Limerick, and stay there long enough to be married, and go back over the Killarney route? I am confident I could take you to beautiful places you are not likely to find on the ordinary tourist route. Write—no, telegraph—one word, ‘Yes’—that can’t take up much of your time—and I will come over at once. And then, you see, as one must be practical and business-like in order to please you, getting married in that quiet way would be very inexpensive: you would have no white silk gown to buy, and I should have no lockets to get for the bridesmaids. Now, Kitty, take heart of grace, and telegraph at once. If you telegraph from Killarney, I will go right on to Limerick and wait for you there. Don’t think about it; do it. If you sit down and begin to make out all sorts of calculations, as if you were the secretary of a life insurance company, of course you will arrive at no decision at all, but only plunge yourself in gloom. What a trip that will be, if you will only say ‘Yes!’ If you went by Bandon and Dunmanway, we will come back by Inchi-geelah; and of course we shall go down to Inisheen; and perhaps to the stream there, some moonlight night, just to let Don Fierna and the rest of them know that you had not quite forgotten. You have not quite forgotten, Kitty? I had the date engraved on the ring you gave me, and then I grudged the expense, for it was useless. There are some things that are engraven on the heart; they become a part of you; you can put them away from you only when you put life away; and I do not think that either of us is likely to forget the vow of that night.

“Well, now, Kitty, the inhuman wretch who occupies the quaint small house by the river that I told you of still remains in it; I often take a turn round that way to see if there is not a board up; but no, the wretched limpet still clings to his shell. Never mind; we shall have plenty of time to walk about and pick out a comfortable little place for ourselves; for, you see, I can always use the fine mornings for walking out, and shift on my work to the time of rain. And then, when we give ourselves a whole holiday, Kitty, there is no end to the beautiful, quiet places one can get to from this neighborhood. I have explored them all; and the whole time I was thinking, ‘I know Kitty will be

charmed with this place; and I am certain she never could have been here before.' Scarcely anybody knows what beautiful sequestered spots there are in Richmond Park alone. Then, you see, Kitty, by taking those furnished rooms to begin with, you will be able to fall into house-keeping ways by degrees; and we shall take plenty of time to choose a pretty small house, and put things into it just as we want them. You will be surprised at the knowledge I have acquired of the prices of tables and chairs and carpets; and Ross—that is your Scotch friend—has promised, *when the great time comes*, to present you with a tea-service of old black Wedgwood that he picked up somewhere in Surrey, and that is about the only thing of value that he possesses. Just fancy your sitting in state at your own tea-table in your own house! 'Will you have another cup of tea, Mr. Ross?' 'No, thank you, my dear Mrs. Fitzgerald, but if you would sing another of those Irish songs, that is what I would like to have.' Then you go to the piano: of course we must hire a piano the very first thing, for you are not going to forget your music, Miss Kitty, when you enter upon domestic slavery. And what about 'The Minstrel Boy' for our Scotchman? Or will you make him cry with 'Silent, oh, Moyle?' Or do you think he will care as much for 'The Bells of Shandon' as we do? I think not. He does not know certain associations. He cannot recall the white Sunday mornings; and the quietude of the country walks; and Kitty declaring that she should never have the courage to marry anybody, and that her proper *role* in life was to be an old maid.

"Come, now, Kitty! You have a tremendous courage when you like. Pull yourself together. If Miss Patience is preaching political economy, tell her to go to the mischief. I am thinking of your eyes when you meet me—at *Limerick*. Will you be shy and coquettish. Or will you be imperious and riding the high horse? I know you can be in any mood you choose; and the mood I would have you choose is that of the Kitty of the old, beautiful, love-sweetened days, not this timid, fearing, business-like Kitty whom I don't know a bit. Who wrote, 'Just tell them there's a poor girl in Ireland who is breaking her heart for your sake?' I know, whatever troubles you may be thinking of now, everything will look quite bright and hopeful when I get hold of your shoulders, and challenge your eyes to do anything but smile. So no more of your despon-

dency, you pretty, black-eyed, tiny sweetheart; but one word, and the expenditure of one shilling, and then don't bother your head any more about it until you see me at Limerick. Then I will take command of you, and be responsible for you; and we will together make short work of your economical fears.

"This from one who knows you and loves you far too well to believe in your want of courage; and who sends no other message, or kisses, or anything of the kind—for he is bringing them.

W. F.

He went out, and walked rapidly to the pillar letter-box, and posted the letter; there seemed so little time to lose. And then he walked back more slowly, wondering if he had said everything likely to entice Kitty to a decision.

Just as he was entering the courtyard the postman came along with the second morning delivery, and he had two letters for Fitzgerald. Master Willie took them with little interest (for he was still thinking of the phrases he had used in the appeal sent over the sea), and opened them leisurely as he was going up the stair. And yet the first of these read oddly enough:—

"DEAR MR. FITZGERALD,—I wonder if you could spare me a few minutes to-morrow, Wednesday, evening, before you leave the house. Or, if that is inconvenient, any other evening will do; but to-morrow evening I am sure to be at home. I only want a few minutes' talk with you.

"Yours faithfully,

"MARY CHETWYND."

He could not imagine what Miss Chetwynd could have to say to him; but as nothing further was to be made out of the letter, he put it in his pocket. The next that he opened was written on the note paper of a hotel in Venice.

"DEAR FITZ,—It is an age since I heard anything of you; and I have seen so few English periodicals that I have no means of telling how you are getting on. Well, I hope. You have enthusiasm, good health, and an insatiable thirst for work: Pactolus will flow your way sooner or later. The beast of a stream doesn't flow my way; quite the reverse; it flies at my approach; hence these tears. The fact is, I am temporarily very hard up, and awkwardly situated as well—I can't explain, but you may guess, and

so, to get out of these embarrassments, I have taken a liberty which I know you won't mind, for it can't cause you any inconvenience. I have drawn a bill on you at three months for £150; and if you would have the good nature to accept it on presentation, you will do me a great service; and of course you will suffer no harm, for it will be taken up long before that. It is merely the use of your signature for a few weeks that I want; and I sha'n't forget your friendliness; *on connait l'ami au besoin*.

"How is the Lady Irmingarde, and how are the little ringlets round her ears? Be a good boy, and marry the young damsel decently and honorably before the *fides pudica*—I do not write *Punica*, and mean no such thing—begins to show the strain of time and distance; and then you will settle down into proper domestic ways, and run no risk of getting into scrapes either at home or abroad. I hope Gifford gives you plenty to do; two guineas are much too little; but I suppose you make it help. Scobell has turned out to be a mean fellow; I always suspected guinea-pigs.

"Yours faithfully,

"HILTON CLARKE."

He went down the steps again, and knocked at Ross's door.

"Come in."

He entered, and found the Scotchman smoking an after-breakfast pipe, seated opposite a picture, and staring at it, but with neither brushes nor palette in his hand.

"There!" said Fitzgerald, triumphantly handing him the letter. "Didn't I tell you so?"

Ross read the letter through deliberately, and handed it back.

"Well?" said he. "I always thought him a scoundrel. Now I think him an impudent scoundrel. What more?"

"I tell you he is nothing of the kind!" said Fitzgerald, indignantly. "Don't you see from that letter that he does not think he has done me any injury? I told you so. I told you there were people who otherwise might be admirable enough, but who simply wanted that sixth sense about money matters—"

"That sixth sense!" said Ross, angrily. "And did not I tell you not to go and confuse things by calling common honesty a sixth sense? If a scoundrel in the street picks

my pocket, I do not think about any sixth sense; I give him into the hands of the nearest policeman."

"But you Scotchmen are too literal, and so exacting. You won't believe in a man having any virtues, unless he has them all. Now this man was exceedingly good-natured; he was very friendly to me; I am certain he does not think at this minute that he did me any wrong; he simply has no conscientiousness on that one point—"

"It's a want of conscientiousness that has landed many a poor wretch in gaol who had far greater excuses than that idling, selfish creature," said John Ross. "Man, I thought he had opened your een. I thought it was the one good turn he had done ye. I thought he had given ye a lesson. And now, I suppose, ye'll go and sign this bill; and you'll believe he'll pay it; and the end will be—ten pounds to one is the bet I will put on it—I'm saying I will bet ten pounds to five shillings—that not one farthing of that money will come out of anybody's pocket but your own, if ye put your name on the back of the paper."

He knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and continued still more angrily,—

"Man, ye do not deserve to have a young lass waiting for ye—away over there in Ireland waiting for ye—and you to talk about throwing away your money on a scoundrel like that——"

"But wait a minute, Ross; I'm not going to do anything of the kind. I would not accept a bill, or back it—the fact is, I don't know what the proper phrase is—for any human being. I've seen the results of it over in our district; the Coursing Club showed me that. And indeed," added Fitzgerald, going forward to look at the picture, "I may soon have need of all the money I can get. There is just a—a possibility of my setting up house, in a small way, by and by."

"Ay? Well, that's better news. That's sensible. But don't turn the mill too hard. You were at work early this morning."

"At work?" said Fitzgerald, staring. "I have not been at work at all. I have not had any breakfast yet, by the way."

"Then what was all that stamping up and down for? I thought ye were hammering out an epic poem."

"Oh," said Fitzgerald, vaguely, remembering that he

might have paced up and down the room in his eagerness to get persuasive phrases. "I was only writing a letter."

"It must have been a terrible business," said the other, grimly.

"So it is," said Fitzgerald, perhaps a trifle absently—"to convince one who is at a great distance from you, in a letter. It is difficult and disheartening at times."

Ross glanced at him keenly.

"Things are not going quite right, then?" said he.

"Oh yes," answered Fitzgerald, with a forced cheerfulness. "Oh yes. Quite right. Oh yes, I think everything is going quite right; and by and by I hope you will have the opportunity for presenting the Wedgwood tea-cups with a pretty speech. Of course letter-writing is a round-about kind of way of arranging anything; it is difficult to explain, and to persuade; and one is so apt to take wrong impressions from a letter. Especially a girl, you see, who is nervous and anxious, and afraid to trust her own judgment in taking a decided step. Any one can understand that. Then—then—then it is very hard and difficult to write, you see; for if you are too serious, she may think you are alarmed, and she may prefer the safety of remaining as she is; and again, if you are too cheerful in trying to raise her spirits, she may think that the immediate necessity for coming to a decision cannot possibly be near. It is so much better to see the—the person. But this time, Ross—I don't mind telling you—I have made a very definite proposal. I should not wonder if I were to leave London this very week—and come back with a wife."

"Good luck to ye, then! Now I can understand there's no fear o' your letting that fellow have any more o' your money."

"Of course," said Fitzgerald, handing him the other letter, "that may have something to do with it."

Ross glanced over Miss Chetwynd's brief note.

"Whatever the matter is, it is important," said Fitzgerald. "She has never asked me to see her like that before. Perhaps they are tired of the present arrangement. Perhaps they think it costs too much; or they may want to have some one else. Well, well," said he, more cheerfully, "if it is so, let it be so. One can live somehow. I am not going to break my heart about that."

"Are ye coming out for a stroll, then?"

"Indeed no. I am going to get some breakfast; and

then set to work on another article on the Irish Ballads. It's wonderful with what heart you work when you know the work is going to be paid for."

"It's no a common experience wi' me," said Ross, dryly.

Fitzgerald was whistling to himself as he went up the steps again. It was not the possibility of his losing that chief means of livelihood that could daunt him. Now his mind was full of far other concerns; and he was forcing himself to believe the best. When was the white day to come? At Limerick, at Inchigeelah, on the Blackwater, on the Shannon, he and she together would think but little of what had happened or might happen in London. Might they not find a four-leaved shamrock somewhere in the still summer woods?

He worked away at this essay on the Irish Ballads with great apparent cheerfulness. When he stamped up and down, as was his wont, sometimes he hummed the air of one or other of the old songs he was transcribing. But when he came to "Kathleen O'More"—"My own little Kathleen, my poor little Kathleen, my Kathleen O'More"—he did not get on so quickly. Perhaps there was some chance association—or the bit of likeness between the names; but it seemed difficult to him to copy these lines. And at last the pen was pushed aside, and his head fell forward on his clasped hands.

* * * * *

Why was Kitty at Killarney; and why was she so cold, and speaking in a voice that seemed far away and strange, and not close, and tender, and familiar as in the old and happy time? She could not have forgotten Inisheen!

CHAPTER XXI.

IMAGININGS.

IT was without concern or apprehension of any kind that he went up on this evening to Hyde Park Gardens. He cared not what might happen in that direction. He was scarcely thinking of it.

As usual on reaching the house he left his hat and coat in the hall, and carried his bundle of books and newspapers upstairs to the drawing-room; but, to his surprise, found no one there. So he deposited the literature on the table, and went and stood before the fire—an institution retained in this house, for the mere sake of cheerfulness, long after the early summer warmth had set in—and stared into the shifting and flickering lights as if he could find something behind them. There was an absolute silence in the room.

Then a slight noise startled him from his reverie, and, turning, he found Mary Chetwynd approaching him, with a pleasant smile on her face.

“Good-evening, Mr. Fitzgerald,” said the tall young lady with the pretty head and the clear eyes.

“Good-evening,” said he, very respectfully.

“Auntie’s compliments, and she is very sorry she can’t see you this evening. She has caught a bad cold, and the doctor has ordered her to keep to her room for a couple of days. Won’t you sit down?”

As Miss Chetwynd gave him this invitation, she herself passed over to an easy-chair near the fire. What perfect self-possession she had! Everything she did or said seemed to come to her so simply and naturally! When he observed this quiet and serious dignity and grace of manner, he could not but think of Kitty’s will-o’-the-wisp flashes of petulance, and affection, and coyness; but it was with no conscious desire to draw any comparison. Kitty was to him the one woman in the world; there was “none like her, none.”

“I hope it is nothing serious?” said he.

“Oh dear no. Not in the least. In fact, I am wicked enough to look on it as opportune, for now I can speak to you freely for a few minutes, if you will give me so much of your time; and I must tell you that I have a great favor to ask of you, and that I am rather frightened that I may not put my petition before you properly.”

She did not look frightened. She spoke pleasantly; and there was a sort of smile in her eyes.

“Perhaps I may be able to spare you some embarrassment, Miss Chetwynd,” said he, “if I guess what you want to say—”

“I don’t think you could do that, exactly,” was the answer.

“Only this,” he said with indifference: “if you have

any friend you wish to put into my position here, I hope you won't think twice about saying so——"

"Oh, but that is not it at all," she said, promptly. "Who could fill your position? Who could give dear old auntie that interest in everyday life that seemed to be going away from her altogether? Indeed, Mr. Fitzgerald, I am very grateful to you—we all are. You have made my aunt quite chatty and talkative again; and what she talks most about is yourself, and your writings, and your friend the Scotch artist. Oh, that would never do."

At another time Fitzgerald would have been glad enough to hear this frank and kindly speech; for he had not guessed that this was the light in which she regarded the situation. But on this evening, somehow, his thoughts were elsewhere; he was indifferent as to what might happen to him with regard to this post of his; there was a weight on his heart—he knew not why.

"You have often heard auntie speak of Boat of Garry?"

"Yes," said Fitzgerald, with a sudden awakening of interest. For now she was three hundred miles and more nearer his thoughts.

"That is what I want to speak to you about then; and I shall have to make some explanations before I put my request before you. No doubt you know that auntie, who is generosity itself, made a present of the whole place, just as it stood, horses and carriages and so forth—everything, indeed—to my poor brother."

"Oh, yes, I know that," said Fitzgerald, who had heard a good deal about this place on Bantry Bay from one source or another, and had even imbibed the preposterous notion that Miss Chetwynd had wanted to turn him into a bailiff, or steward, or something of the kind.

"Fortunately my poor brother was pretty well off," she continued, "and so he could keep up the place; though hunting was his favorite amusement, and he always spent the winter in England. But the summer and autumn he usually spent at Boat of Garry; and sometimes auntie and I went over and stayed for a while. Those were very happy days for the dear old lady; for she quite worshipped her boy, as she called him, and she was so proud to see him go about over his own place. Her kindness to him was beyond anything you can imagine. I don't know whether she has ever told you, but she is dreadfully afraid of the sea——"

"I guessed as much from one or two things she has said," Fitzgerald answered.

"I think she was nearly drowned when a girl, or something like that. However, she detests being on the water. And yet she went and bought a small steam launch for Frank—for the place is rather out of the way; and she used to control her nerves and go on board that detestable boat—yes, and drag me too—and pretend to be quite delighted when we went roaring and puffing through the beautiful quiet scenery up by Glengariff, or darted about Bearhaven, threatening collisions on every hand. What I thought of these excursions I need not tell you——"

"I don't know much about steam-launches, but I should think ladies would not care much for them."

That was what he said; what he was thinking of was Glengariff. Had Kitty and Miss Patience passed that way? Were the roses out in the hedgerows yet? Had they walked along the shore in the twilight? Had she tried the piano in the drawing-room later on? Did the people know who she was? Had she sung for them? Why had she not written?

"Then after the—the dreadful accident," said Miss Chetwynd—and for a moment she looked aside somewhat—"you have heard about that too, I suppose, when poor Frank was taken from us—I thought auntie would never recover. Her interest in life seemed to be completely gone. But what she insisted on was that Boat of Garry should be left exactly as my poor brother had left it. Nothing was to be touched. You see, the property had reverted to her; and she could not bear the idea of going there; and still less the idea of selling it; and so she said it should remain exactly as Frank left it. And so it has remained, from that day to this."

She heaved a little sigh.

"That is the sad part of the story. Perhaps you know most of it. And now I come to the request I have to make of you, Mr. Fitzgerald, and it is a very plain and unsentimental one. I really think it a pity that a property like that should be allowed to remain absolutely useless; and I am not sure that auntie would not think so also, if some change could be made gradually. I don't actually wish that she should sell the place, for it has been a long time in the possession of her side of the family; besides, it has associations for both of us. It is a long time now since my

poor brother was killed; and—and, if I may hint as much again—since my aunt made your acquaintance she has been much more like her former self, and less given to that moping she gave way to for a time. Now don't you yourself think it a pity that a place like that over at Bantry should be allowed to exist without being of use to a single soul?"

"It does seem so," said Fitzgerald. "But does no one occupy it?"

"No; that is the absurdity of it—well, why should I call it an absurdity when it was only a testimony to the poor old lady's grief? No one occupies it. We have to pay—at least my aunt pays—for keeping up the whole establishment; and all that we get from it is a hamper of game now and again in the autumn, or a salmon. There the whole place is—horses, a coachman, a gamekeeper, a yachtsman, and two woman-servants; and I suppose the only person who makes any use of the place is Mr. McGee, the solicitor in Bantry, for when he goes round to pay the wages, and that, I suppose he has some shooting, or a sail in the steam-launch. I proposed some time ago to my aunt that she should at least bring the horses and carriages to London; but when poor old auntie said nothing at all, but only turned away to hide the tears in her eyes, what further could I urge? You see, they were his horses. He was proud of them. So with the steam-launch. She would not hear of its being sold. In fact, for a long time any reference to the place was so distressing to her that I did not even mention it, except when I had to draw out a check for Mr. McGee, and then it was simply, 'Auntie dear, Mr. McGee wants so much.' You may think all this an absurd piece of sentiment; perhaps it is; but then, you see, I am Frank's sister, and I know how kind my aunt was to him: and if she has still this feeling about preserving intact what belonged to him, I don't find it altogether ridiculous."

"I hope not," said Fitzgerald, gently. He thought she spoke very prettily about this matter. He should not have thought she had so much sympathy.

"But now," she said—"now that time has gone by, and auntie seems a little more cheerful, I think some effort should be made to get some good out of the place. I don't know that I am very penurious, but I assure you I do grudge to have to draw out checks to keep up a perfectly useless place like that. Perhaps it is because I see a good

deal of want and trouble and misery that my conscience rebels against throwing away money like that."

"Surely you are quite right," said Fitzgerald, though he did not quite know why he should be appealed to. "If Mrs. Chetwynd does not wish to sell the place, and if it would be painful for her to go and live in it, why might she not let it? If the shooting is fair, it ought to let. The neighborhood is pretty enough."

"That is what I think too," said Mary Chetwynd, with that placid, intelligent smile of hers. "But the only person who could induce her to let the place, and so save all this expense, is yourself, Mr. Fitzgerald; and now you know why I have ventured to ask you to do me a great favor."

"I? What could I do about it?" he exclaimed.

"If I were to go now and ask auntie to let Boat of Garry," said Miss Chetwynd, "she would think me very cruel and hard-hearted. The idea of turning in a stranger to succeed to poor Frank's dog-cart, and his gun-room, and the little cabin in the steam-yacht—that would be quite terrible to her. But she might get accustomed to the idea. She would not mind your going over and occupying the place. She has a great regard for you. You are about Frank's age; you know about shooting: it would seem natural enough to her that you should go over and live at Boat of Garry for a time. That once done, the rest would be easy. There would be no difficulty about persuading her to let it next year to one or other of our friends—some of the scientifics, as she calls them, are very fond of shooting. I know I am asking a great deal," she continued, quickly, for she saw that he looked rather astonished. "You are making your way in literature, and this looks as if you might be taken away from that for a considerable time. But would it be so? I can not imagine any place better fitted for literary work, unless, indeed, you found it really too solitary; and then you could send across to Bantry, and you may be sure that Mr. McGee, who is a sporting character, would be only too glad to join you. Then, again—you see, Mr. Fitzgerald," she said, with a laugh, "I have to begin by persuading you, and if I fail with you, I am done altogether—you would have the kind of holiday that would just suit you, according to all accounts. You would have fishing, shooting, and boating, in a sort of country that you are familiar with. You have been very close at work, I

should judge, since you came to London. You have scarcely ever been out of London."

"But," said he, in rather a bewildered way, "do you mean this? Is it an actual proposal—that I should go to Ireland now?"

"Oh no, not at all," she said pleasantly. "It is only a project of mine. My prayer to you is that if auntie should suggest your going over to Ireland, and taking your holiday in that way, you won't refuse. I have put the whole situation of affairs before you; and if you cared to take your holiday that way, it would be, as you see, conferring a great obligation on us, and on me especially, for you would be helping me to carry out my plan."

It was a prospect that ought to have been alluring enough to a young man of his habits and occupations. But he could not think of that now. There was something of far greater import to him and his future occupying his thoughts.

"You mean this year?" he says. "Now?"

"I am not sure about 'now,'" she said. "Well, say 'now,' or as soon as I can get my aunt coaxed to make the suggestion. The salmon-fishing has begun, has it not?"

"I am sorry," said he, rather breathlessly, "but—but I may be called away to Ireland on important affairs within the very next few days; I could not pledge myself with any certainty—"

And then a wild idea occurred to him—an idea that sent the blood rushing to his brain. What if the two excursions could be combined? What if he were to take Kitty to Boat of Garry instead of to Inisheen? Here, indeed, was a project! Poor Kitty, whose imagination had been bothered by vain dreams of driving a carriage and pair! here was the very carriage and pair provided for her, and the quietest of country residences for the honeymoon, and a yacht at her disposal, and servants and all awaiting her! Could anything be more opportune? Was there ever such a coincidence in human history? Of course he knew that great people frequently lent their country-seat to a bridegroom and bride as a safe and pleasant retreat during the honeymoon; but that he and Kitty should be suddenly and unexpectedly provided with this paradise down by the sea—that, surely, was a thing that never could have entered her brain, even when she was dreaming of the bliss of having a carriage and pair, and being rich, and

driving through pretty scenery. Moreover, would it not be a great inducement for her to fix a definite time? Could she withstand the pictures he would draw of this happy and secret retirement there?

"But," said he, quickly, "did you mean that it was necessary that I should go to Boat of Garry alone?"

"Alone? Not at all," said she. "I spoke of your being there alone in case you might want to continue your literary work. Of course I don't think I could induce auntie to let you take with you, although you are a great favorite of hers, a big party of strangers——"

"Oh, I don't mean that at all," said Fitzgerald, hastily. His brain was painting pictures with such vivid colors as John Ross never squeezed out of any tin tube.

"It would be a great favor to me," continued Miss Chetwynd, seeing that he was now considering her scheme, "and it would be a pleasant holiday for you, and it would be doing a service to poor old auntie. She would see that very soon. The present state of affairs could not possibly continue; and I am sure, once the gradual change was made, she would be the first to acknowledge that it was right. To tell you the truth, Mr. Fitzgerald, I was once a little afraid of that fixed idea of hers. I did not like it, especially when she was alone, her melancholy seemed to get so morbid and hopeless. But now that she has come back to the old interest in everyday affairs, surely now is the time to get her to give up this too sensitive repugnance of hers to having Boat of Garry touched in any way; and I don't see any one else who can do it so easily as you. I do not know whether it has occurred to you," she continued—and for the first time she showed a little embarrassment—"but I think my aunt wishes to put you, as far as is now possible, in Frank's place—I mean in her little world of friendships and interests; and sometimes I am quite startled, when I come into the room accidentally, to hear her chatting to you in exactly the same tone she used to use to him. She thinks you are exactly his height; but you are an inch and a half taller—two inches, perhaps. And dear old auntie forgets a little; and now she thinks that poor Frank was just as fond of books and writing and poetry and all that as you are, whereas there was nothing Frank hated so much as a book, except *British Rural Sports*, and Colonel Hawker's volume, and the *Field*, on Sunday morning. You won't find much of a library at Boat of Garry if you go there. Do

you think it is hard of me to speak of my dead brother like that? Sometimes I think I have less than my share of natural affection, when I find I can't quite believe all that poor old auntie believes about him. And yet I was very fond of him. The world seemed quite changed for me when he died; there seemed to be no one with whom I ever could be so intimate, and who did me so much good in talking plain common sense when I was inclined to attempt impossible things. And yet when I find how common such sorrows are, I sometimes think that I grieve too much, and that I should try not to think about him at all, but to go on with my work, such as it is, and let everything be for the best. Only the world seemed to get so empty when he was taken away from us. I cared more for his approval than for anybody's, although he was not clever. I could not bear his laughing at me. I used to go out with him when he went shooting' though the cry of a hare when it was struck cut my heart like a knife. The smallest present he made me was of more value than anything anybody else could give me. He used to call me his 'little girl,' though I was quite as tall as he was—perhaps a trifle taller. And—although I am not very sentimental—still, to tell you the truth, Mr. Fitzgerald, I should not like the idea—not just yet—of your taking a big party of strangers to—to—Frank's house."

"Oh of course not," said he, instantly. "I did not dream of such a thing."

She was a little tremulous about the lips—only for a second.

"If any one went with me," said he, thinking it better she should know the truth, "it would be my wife."

"But you are not married Mr. Fitzgerald?" she exclaimed, with wonder in her eyes.

"No——"

"But you are going to be?" she said, with a quick interest.

Then her eyes dropped.

"I beg your pardon. I really beg your pardon," she said, as she rose. "I have taken up so much of your time. You ought to have stopped my chatter. Well, may I assume that you are my accomplice?"

"Miss Chetwynd," said he, with a smile, "I have a suspicion that your ways are very like your aunt's ways, and

that you contrive kindnesses under the guise of begging for a favor."

"On the contrary," she said, as she gave him her hand, "my motives are distinctly mercenary. I don't want that money to be thrown away from year to year for nothing; and I ask for your help. At the same time I am not saying that you might not have a pleasant holiday there. Good-night, and thank you so much."

Even in his eager haste to get outside and consider all the bearings of this new proposal that he would lay before Kitty, he could not but carry away with him a pleasant impression from this little interview. Mary Chetwynd had been so gentle, so kind, and serious, and true in manner, so good an example (as he thought) of an accomplished and amiable and frank young English gentlewoman, that he had a little remorse about it all. Perhaps he had misunderstood her somewhat. It did not appear that her heart had been altogether hardened by scornful knowledge: what if there were no such deadly antagonism, after all, between sentiment and science? How nicely she had spoken of old Mrs. Chetwynd! what true affection breathed in her little simple sentences about her brother! Even that bit of embarrassment seemed so womanly: she had instantly withdrawn her questions for fear of giving offence. And if she were to prove the means of putting this great happiness within the reach of Kitty and himself, would he not seek some opportunity in the future to show that he was not altogether insensible of her kindness?

But the immediate thing was to let Kitty know. He was so anxious to put any additional inducement before her; and certainly this one—as his quick imagination pictured it—was of sufficient value. But would it appeal in like measure to Kitty? Would she be able to see all those fascinating glimpses of their life together in the house by the sea that now crowded in on his mind? What a pity it was he had not been able to add this temptation to his letter of that morning! No matter; by the time she reached Limerick both letters would probably be awaiting her at the post-office.

Then in his impatience he walked to a telegraph office, and sent off this message to her: "If you are remaining at Killarney, ask letters to be forwarded from Limerick. Do not answer first letter till you get second. Telegraph if this reached."

This second letter was the one that he was now hurrying home to write. And these were bright-colored pictures that he saw before him in the gray dusk of the evening, as he went rapidly along the London streets. He somewhat forced himself to think of them. There was something else he would not think of—that he put away. This was the immediate question: whether Kitty also would not be fascinated by these new possibilities? Had she already had a passing glance at the beauties of Glengariff?—then she would know the sort of country through which she could have her daily drives in that coveted carriage and pair. Would she come part of the way up the hill in the evening to meet him on his return from the shooting? Would she take a book with her and sit on the river-bank, among the warm grass and the meadow-sweet, while with a big sweep of the rod he dropped the great salmon-fly into the deep and distant pool? And then he knew that Kitty would jump up with a shriek of delight when the struggle began; and she would watch with wide eyes the rushes and the sharp and dangerous leaps of the big fish; and by and by, when victory was becoming sure, would she stand by his side with the gaff ready to his hand? For one thing, Kitty was not the best of sailors. But then you could so quickly run back again in a steam-launch if there was anything like a sea on outside; and no doubt still days would occur on which she might, all by herself, as it were—imagine Kitty in sole command of a steamer!—sail all the way around by Dursey Head into Kenmare River, while he shot across the Slieve Miskish heights, if the Boat of Garry shootings extended so far. And then to think of his being away up there in the wilderness of rock and heather, and far below him the little toy steamer, and the tiniest figure sitting in the stern reading. Can the dog-whistle reach as far? Or the view halloo of the keeper to the engine-man. Or is it Kitty herself who first catches sight of them, and starts up, and waves a handkerchief? It is almost a race down the hill at last; and then the little boat is sent ashore, and they are pulled out to the small steamer, and the birds and the big brown hares are all laid out on deck. And then away to sea again in the golden evening, with the long headlands growing warmer in color as the sun sinks, and the Atlantic murmuring all along the solitary coasts. Would there be a piano at Boat of Garry? Or would their evenings be

spent out of doors mostly, until the stars began to be visible over the trees? Kitty was fond of the darkness and of silence; they would hear the curlews calling along the shore as they went home through the meadows.

It was of Kitty at Boat of Garry, not of Kitty at Kilarney, that he forced himself to think. Also he persuaded himself that this way of spending the honeymoon would be a very inexpensive one. Kitty must admit that. There would be no hotel bills, no costs by road or rail. Kitty was almost in the neighborhood; the traveling would be nothing. Would it be asking too much that the carriage should meet them at Kenmare to take them up and over the gaunt mountain-road until they descended into the leafy woods of Glengariff? No doubt the horses would be the better for some good stiff work now; it was far from probable that the coachman had taken them out for regular exercise in a place where there was no master.

These points and many more were put before Kitty in this second letter. It was a very matter of fact letter. It assumed that Kitty would be as delighted as himself with this opportune proposal. Why should he implore and beseech?—would not his faithful Kitty rejoice as he rejoiced to see their dearest hopes within easy reach of fulfilment? And it behooved him to be very business-like now. Kitty need not be afraid of the cost of the wedding; the simpler the better. And if he disingenuously omitted to mention all the minute points of the case—if, without being guilty of any misstatement whatsoever, he still left it possible for Kitty to imagine that this proposal that they should occupy Boat of Garry had been made by the Chetwynds with especial reference to her marriage trip—what harm was there in Kitty innocently believing that these two ladies wished to be kind to her?

So he went and posted that letter too. All that he could do he had done. Then he walked back to the courtyard, found John Ross at home, and the rest of the evening was spent in the Scotchman's studio.

For Fitzgerald had grown half afraid of sitting by himself in the solitary room upstairs. Sometimes strange imaginings would flash across his brain—fears that took his breath away—that were hateful and horrible—that were as unworthy of himself as they were cruel to the true-hearted

and tender-eyed Kitty, who was so far away, with no one to speak for her innocence and honor and faith, if he should dare to doubt.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE REVELATION.

THE days passed; no message of any kind, no letter, no telegram, came to these poor lodgings in the Fulham Road. No work was possible for him. He kept pacing up and down the room, listening for the postman, or idly wandering through the streets of Chelsea, always certain that her reply would be awaiting him there on his return. If he thought of anything, it was of how he and she together would occupy the mornings and days and long summer evenings at Boat of Garry. His eyes were turned to the south. He seemed to keep his face averted from Killarney. Limerick was a blank to him.

He tried to avoid John Ross; but Ross was not to be avoided. He came upstairs, regarded Fitzgerald for a second, looked suspiciously round—as was his wont, indeed, for his eyes seemed to take in everything—and forthwith drove his neighbor down into the studio, where Fitzgerald found that a sumptuous supper (according to their notions down that way) had been prepared for two.

“I have noticed ye, my man,” said Ross, “once or twice of late. Ye are at it again.”

“At what?”

“Starving yourself.”

“Indeed I am not. Why should I starve myself when I have four pounds a week, with chances of more?”

Ross muttered something to himself, as he brought one or two further things to the supper table. Then he fetched a bottle of beer for his companion, and they both sat down. Fitzgerald began to talk about a railway accident that had happened the previous day, but Ross had other thoughts in his mind.

“Ye are not starving yourself, then?” said he, glancing at his neighbor.

“Not in the least.”

“Ye are not looking well, then. Ye keep too much indoors, and too much in town. Ye’ll forget what the country is like if ye go on like this; and fine leeterature you’ll turn out then!—leeterature with a white face and bloodless hands. What the mischief do ye mean?” he exclaimed, suddenly. “No meat?”

Fitzgerald had pushed his plate away, and was merely playing with a bit of crust.

“I had something,” he said, evasively.

“When?”

“Oh, not very long ago.”

“When?” said the other.

“Well, about the middle of the day.”

“And so ye have got yourself into the habit of eating nothing after two o’clock?”

He himself was busy enough. For a time Fitzgerald had all the talking. What he talked about was merely the current news of the papers.

“There’s an article I would like to see ye write; ye might do some good wi’t,” said Ross at length.

“What do you charge for supplying subjects to poor authors?”

“Oh, but it’s no for fine leeterary treatment, this. It’s a sledge-hammer ye want to smash down a piece of meeserable hypocrisy. I want ye to denounce the perneecious sympathy that ye find expressed in books—and mostly in weemen’s books, I may say—for the genteel folk who are ‘keeping up appearances,’ and for the trouble they suffer in consequence. Lord save us! these are the people we are to sympathize wi’—people whose vanity makes them live at eight hundred pounds a year, when they have only three hundred pounds; and it’s a ‘proper pride’; and they’re doing the best for the family. A proper pride that must suffer some stings, I should think, when the unpaid tradesmen come ringing at the door. And then the way they are described as peetying themselves, and sighing with resignation over their struggles, just as if God had decreed them to have hired broughams, and dinner parties, and their daughters at boarding-schools, and what not; and as if their no being able to settle their bills was something they could not make out! No; it is their right to live in such a way; it never occurs to them that if they have three hundred pounds a year, they’d better live on that, or less; they have to keep up appearances, and you and me are

expected to have a great peety for all they suffer through their perneecious vanity and pretence. If they choose to live beyond their income, let them smart for it!—why should I peety them? I peety the butchers and green-grocers that they plunder; or, worse still, that they leave so long unpaid that the poor man, for want of ready money, is forced to take to overcharging and trade dodges, and in a measure becomes a thief. Now I am told,” said he, fixing his keen eyes on Fitzgerald for a second, “that you Irish are rayther given to that keeping up of appearances; that is to say, living at a rate ye can not properly afford.”

Fitzgerald suspected as much. These homilies of Ross’s generally ended with a personal application.

“Some of the small squireens are pretty much given that way,” he said, “but I suppose you’ll find about an equal amount of pretentiousness everywhere among the poor genteel. It isn’t easy for them to give up the way of living they have been used to.”

“But it’s the beginning, my lad,” said the other. “It’s the beginning to live beyond your means that’s the mischief. Now you, for example—how are you going to begin?”

“I told you. In two small rooms, I hope, at perhaps eight or ten shillings a week. Then we shall look about for a house.”

“What size?”

“Small. But I know what you are thinking of, Ross, and there’s no use beating about the bush. You are thinking that I am starving myself, being too keen in saving up money; and that this probably means that I shall start housekeeping in too expensive a way. I think that is about what you are afraid of.”

“It is,” said the other, promptly. “You have just hit it. I can not understand the use of such violent means. I take it that when two young people get married, they should accommodate themselves reasonably and fairly to their income—not starving yourself, laddie—and when circumstances improve, let their expenditure grow. But if ye begin at the beginning with a vain pretence of genteelity, and get into trouble, do ye expect I am going to peety ye? Not one jot.”

“No; what you would do would be to lend us money,” said Fitzgerald, who knew the ways of this person. “But there’s no starvation in the case—not the least”

"Then what is the matter with ye? Where got ye that grayness in the face?" said his friend, whose eyes missed nothing.

"I have been working hard," said the other, evasively, "and been anxious a little about one or two things."

"I wish ye could bring that young lass over here and marry her straight off," said Ross, bluntly.

"That may not be so far away," was Fitzgerald's answer; and his friend—though he waited for a second, regarding him, as if he expected him to say more—accepted Fitzgerald's silence, and forbore to press him with any question.

Next morning there was again neither letter nor telegram. This suspense was more than he could bear. He hastily went to the telegraph office, and sent messages both to Killarney and Limerick, asking whether she had not received his communications. More than that, he telegraphed to the postmaster at Limerick, asking to be informed whether letters addressed to Miss Romaine had been sent or called for.

The day passed somehow; there was no answer. And now he made sure she could be neither at Killarney nor at Limerick; and a thousand conjectures filled his anxious mind as to what might have happened. He went back over her letters. There she had used the phrase "make our way" to Limerick; and it occurred to him that instead of coming back by rail to Mallow, and so getting north, it was just possible she and Miss Patience might have tried to get round by Tralee and Listowel, taking the stage-coaches. And although they were both pretty experienced travellers, who could tell what slight misadventure might not have detained them somewhere in these western wilds? It was the only possible explanation of Kitty's silence. And again he convinced himself that there could not have been any serious accident, or that would have found its way to the papers. That truant Kitty, to go and lose herself among these Kerry mountains!

Then, when he was least expecting it, there came to him a letter, or brief note rather.

KILLARNEY, *Thursday Morning.*

"DEAR WILLIE,—You drive me to say that you are very inconsiderate in worrying me with these constant

letters and telegrams. I meet with so much consideration and kindness on every hand that it is all the more surprising to find you so exacting and impatient. That would not seem a pleasing prospect to any one. I have not sent for your letters to the Limerick Post-office, because there would not be time. We leave here to-morrow, and do not go to Limerick, the engagement being cancelled. But I dare say I know what is in them; and I am rather tired of arguing. Besides, you do not seem to think of anything but your own wishes. How could I turn adrift Miss Patience, who has no means of livelihood whatever? She has been most faithful and good and kind to me; and of course I could not send her away without making some provision for her. I am sure I wish to please every one—especially those who have been *very kind* to me; but it is sometimes so distracting to try to please everybody that sometimes I don't know what I may not do. But please be a little forbearing with me; you are so impetuous.

“Your affectionate KITTY”

He stared at the letter in dumb amazement. Was it really Kitty who had written that? Was it the Kitty with whom he had walked arm in arm through the hawthorn lanes on the Sunday mornings—who could find no speech soft enough, no caressings endearing enough, no words of love true and close and near enough, for him—who was now reproaching him with his want of consideration, and taunting him with the suggestion that others were kinder than he? Was it possible for a woman's heart to change so? He would not look at the intermediate time; he would not think of the last six or eight months' letters; it was the Kitty of Inisheen that he was thinking of—it was the Kitty who had stretched her warm, trembling little hand to him across the stream down in the darkness, and repeated the pledge that gave each to the other, and looked up and kissed him when the lovers' vows were over. Was this the same Kitty?

But she could not have changed so. He would not believe it. Kitty had been put out of temper by something; and at such times she wrote hurriedly, a little incoherently, sometimes heedless of her grammar even. What he would do would be to take the matter in his own hands. He would go and get hold of Kitty herself—that was the first thing. Once he had a grip of her small, warm fingers, he

should feel safe. Poor lass, she had become petulant through being left so much alone. He would press back the hair from her forehead, and smile away the evil spirit from her eyes.

But it suddenly struck him that she had not said where she was going. Was he to lose all clue to her whereabouts, then? Was she to remain for an indefinite time in this petulant mood? Then a strange sort of fear—that seemed to go through his heart like a red-hot wire—stabbed him, as it were; and in a blind and bewildered way he went down the stairs, and went in to Ross's studio.

“Ross,” said he—and Ross certainly stared at him, for his manner was unusual—“I wouldn't show you a love-letter; but this isn't much of a love-letter. I wish you would look at it, and tell me what you think.”

He seemed rather breathless.

“Have you had any quarrel?” said John Ross, when he had read the letter slowly and carefully.

“Quarrel? Not a shadow of a quarrel,” he said, eagerly.

“Will I tell ye what I think?” said his friend, watching his expression closely.

“Why not? Why not? That's what I want.”

“I think that young lass is going to marry another man.”

Fitzgerald reached out his hand, and took back the letter.

“You are quite wrong,” he said, quietly, but with his face very gray and haggard. “You are quite mistaken about that. You don't know my—my darling.”

He went away without another word; and Ross knew better than to follow him.

His faithfulness fought on to the end. He would not believe it. It was not in human nature. The heart of a woman could not be so treacherous. It was not possible for the Kitty whom he had clasped to his breast on the shore there at Inisheen, when her face was wet with tears in the moonlight—it was not possible for that Kitty to be gayly smiling a love smile into other eyes. He had heard her heart beat.

There came a letter:—

DUBLIN, June 2.

“DEAR MR. FITZGERALD,—In the hurry of packing,

I have been commissioned to acquaint you with a piece of news, which I fear will cause you some pain, though probably but little surprise. Miss Romaine is to be married to Mr. Cobbs to-morrow morning; and I believe they go to the Isle of Man afterwards, where Mr. Cobbs has some friends. For my part, I must say I am heartily glad of it; for although Miss Romaine has always been kind to me, and remains so, her successive flirtations have only caused me embarrassment; and I have often been suspected of influencing her to favor this one or reject the other, when in truth I took no interest at all in such trivial matters. What I can not help regretting is the £40 that will have to be paid to the Limerick people for her cancelling the engagement; but Mr. Cobbs has plenty of money, and probably they regard that as a small matter now. I have some things to send back to you, but can not get a proper box before the morning. It shall be registered.

“Yours sincerely,

E. PATIENCE.”

There was one word added to this letter—in another and trembling handwriting. It was in a corner. It was the word “*Forgive.*”

The drowning man, we have often been told, sees all the chief events of his life pass before him—a procession of clear and startling pictures—in time limited to seconds. This man saw wild and sudden visions too, as he bent forward his brow on his clasped hands; but these rapid, bewildering, heart-breaking scenes had always for their central figure a woman. All the rest of his life was forgotten. The beautiful pictures!—filled with the color and sunlight of young love and hope; and even in the midst of them—whether by sea or shore, in rocky glen or on the breezy hillside—some one laughing with parted lips, and smiling with glad eyes. But then this other vision that would intrude: it was like the dreadful thing that Heine saw: “That was a merry bridal feast; joyfully the guests sat at the table; but when I regarded the bridal pair—*Ah, God, my darling was the bride!*”

Was the blow unexpected, then? No. For days and weeks he had been living under the shadow of this nameless fear. It had been like a black cloud over him; he would not look at it; he tried to escape from it; he tried to argue it out of existence. He would not confess to a doubt of Kitty’s honor and faith. Had she not kissed him

by the side of the stream where they had plighted their troth together?

And now he had nothing to say about perjured lips, or women's deceit, or anything of the kind. The wound had struck deeper than that. It had struck at the very foundations of his faith in human nature. Rather vaguely and thoughtfully—for these pictures of Inisheen were still before his eyes—he got his hat and stick, and went out into the mild summer air. The day was fine; the people seemed busy. He only knew that life was over for him; that the world had nothing left for him—except, it might be, a few memories: he was without interest, or care, or hope, though the lad had scarcely touched his four-and-twentieth year.

CHAPTER XXIII.

“SIE TRAGEN ZU DIR, O GELIEBTE!”

It is midday on the first of June; the skies are clear and this old-fashioned coach goes jolting, and rattling, and swinging away through the lonely country that lies between Drimoleague and Bantry Bay. The warm summer air is sweetened, now with the fragrance of the abundant honey-suckle, now with a whiff of peat smoke from one of those poor stone hovels near the wayside. There are plenty of beautiful things to charm the eye of the traveller. There are masses of blue forget-me-nots in the marshy pools. The waste bog-land has its own rich hues; and these rude stone walls that enclose the miserable bit of farm or garden are surmounted by golden gorse. Even the far-reaching sterile hills, where the scant pasturage scarcely tints the barren rock, have their qualities of color that a painter might observe. For the day is beautiful; the air is clear, and the sunshine falls so strongly that the shadows under the hedges or under a steep bank seem quite black—and yet not the opaque black that a palette would give—but a sensitive, deep-reaching, luminous blackness that reveals things within itself, and that is cut across outside by the sharp-pointed spears of the iris, a brilliant deep strong green in the sunlight.

The solitary passenger by this mail-coach regards these things with a minute and close and mechanical attention; perhaps he forces himself so to regard them. He has come through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, as it were: there is a black cloud behind him, and he durst not look that way; he busies himself, and strives to busy himself, with the phenomena of the visible world around him. And while he fondly imagines that he is contemplating these phenomena with the calm and dispassionate eye of an artist—looking at the waste bog-land and the poor hovels and the sad far hills with a view to guessing at their value in color—in reality he is reading human sorrow, and the tragedy of human life, into every sight and sound that meets him.

But the first glimpse of the broad waters of Bantry Bay made his heart leap with pain. Visions and dreams that had occupied days not so far bygone seemed to dazzle his eyes for a moment, but only for a moment. With a terrible effort he put them away. He would not confess to that quick sharp quiver at the heart. He was studying this beautiful picture as John Ross might have studied it. Look at the great width of the sea, with its armllets stretching in between the sunny browns and greens of the headlands. So still is the summer air, so calm and clear is the summer sky, that the blue of these far-reaching arms of water is a dull and almost opaque blue—a sort of sealing wax blue—looking molten and heavy in the spaces between the wooded islands and the rocks. The hills on the other side, that stretch away out to the lonely Atlantic, seem desolate and uninhabited. It is a sad picture, despite the loveliness of the summer day. But if one wishes to lose one's self—to get away from the world, to seek out the secret haunts of nature, and find solace and forgetfulness there—surely these remote shores, these voiceless hills and glens, may afford a resting-place for the tortured soul.

He had to encounter strange faces at Glengariff. At the pretty hotel there, which from a distance seemed to be half smothered among trees and flowers and shrubs, he found a number of the visitors sitting outside, some having afternoon tea at small tables, others playing chess, or smoking, or chatting; and doubtless they would regard the newcomer with sufficient curiosity. No matter; he was soon inside, and there he asked if he might have a room for the night.

"Mr. Fitzgerald, I presume?" said the landlady.

"That is my name," said he, with some astonishment.

"A room has been kept for you," she said; and Fitzgerald could only ask himself why he had been astonished, for indeed the thoughtfulness and kindness of those Chetwynds went beyond all bounds.

"I suppose," said he, "I can get the Castletown mail-car in the morning?"

"But you won't need that, sir," said the good landlady, "for the carriage is coming from Boat of Garry for you at half past ten, if that is convenient. I was to give you the message from Mr. McGee. Mr. McGee has been down to Boat of Garry to see that everything is in readiness for you; and I was to say that he was very sorry he could not stay to meet you here, as he had important business at Kenmare to-day."

"Oh, indeed."

"Visitors' book sir," said a waiter, opening a large volume that lay on the hall table,

"Oh yes," said Fitzgerald, and he mechanically took the pen and wrote his name.

Then he lingered, glancing over the other names on the page, as is the fashion of new arrivals. He had his finger and thumb on the leaf, as if he meant to pursue this aimless inquiry, when all at once he seemed to recall himself: he shut the book hastily, and turned, as if afraid that some one had been watching him, then he went to his room, and remained there until dinner time. He sat at the open window, looking at the beautiful foliage, and listening to the birds, and trying to think of nothing but these. He would not confess to himself what sudden and frightful suspicion it was that had made him so hurriedly shut the visitors' book: nor yet would he ask what new weight this was on his heart—this terrible consciousness that sooner or later, before he left the house, he would be irresistibly drawn to search those pages.

At dinner he sat next a vivacious little old gentleman with a thin dried pale face and a brown wig, an Englishman, whose pleasant chatting, if it was not very wise or profound, served to beguile the time. He gave Fitzgerald a vast amount of information about the neighborhood. He had his views also.

"What is the highest form of human happiness?" he asked, abruptly.

“Killing a brace of ducks right and left,” said Fitzgerald, for the sake of saying something.

“Oh no. These are violent enjoyments, and violent enjoyments are invariably accompanied by violent disappointments. It is the attainment of peace and content, which is only possible after the wild passions and pursuits of youth are over. And what does it depend on? Sound sleep mostly. I mean to live to ninety.”

“I am sure I hope you may,” said his neighbor.

“I think I shall. I see no reason to the contrary,” said the cheerful old gentleman. “I cultivate happiness and health at the same time: indeed, I find them to be the same thing. The only stimulant I allow myself in the day—the only thing that rises a little above the level—is the dinner hour. I permit myself that, and find no harm in it. Now when I was your age I did as most young fellows did at that time: that is to say, without being a drunkard, I drank too much. A brandy and soda in the morning, a pint of claret at lunch, perhaps a glass of Madeira in the afternoon, then the usual wine at dinner. What was the result? There was no novelty in it. There was no pleasant stimulus. The system was too familiar with these repeated excitements. And so nowadays I drink nothing but tea or soda-water up till dinner-time, and then I have my pint of champagne; and my whole system enjoys this unwonted stimulus, and perhaps I may even grow talkative, eh?”

“But about the sound sleep—you have not told me how you secure that,” said Fitzgerald. So long as this old gentleman would talk, he was glad to listen.

“I will tell you; I should like to proclaim it from the house-tops,” said the other, seriously. “It is by having an occupation for all idle hours; an occupation sufficient to fix your attention, so that you can pass a rainy morning without fretting: an occupation sufficient to distract your mind in the evening—I mean the last hour or so before going to bed—and yet leave no puzzling questions behind to disturb you. Now my occupation is to read carefully and strictly through from one end to the other the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Not one of the new editions, which might have modern speculation in it, but the edition of 1812, in forty half-volumes. I am quite sufficiently interested for the moment in Aberagavenny, in Abruzzo, in Abyssinia, or Aquilaus, but yet not so eagerly as to interfere with my sleep: and when I have got away through to the end of the twenty-fourth

volume, I can begin again with my memory free from a single fact. But this I allow myself, I must tell you: I allow myself the use of a number of small hieroglyphics that I put in as I go on; and when I come to one of them again I say to myself, 'Why the last time I read this I was in Mrs. Scott's inn at Boscastle, and what a storm was blowing!' or perhaps another tells me that when I read this paragraph I was at Ben Rhydding, just come back from a stroll across the moors: or perhaps at the Bell Inn at Henley, when all the confusion of the boat races was about—"

"You seem to spend a good part of your life in hotels," suggested Fitzgerald.

"All of it—the whole of it, my young friend," was the prompt reply. "Why should I have the trouble of keeping a house? I have that done for me by those who have had most experience of it of any people in the country. Where should I have peace and quiet if I were worrying about servants and smoky chimneys? Why should I bother about cooking? If I do not like the cooking, or the bedrooms, or the direction of the wind, I go away elsewhere. I could not do that if I were tied to one house, and hampered with my own servants. I agree with Shenstone. I know where to find a warm welcome. I can fit my habitation to the season of the year. At one time I am in the Isle of Wight; at another, in the West Highlands. I may say that England, Scotland, and Ireland form my house; and I have a noble staff of servants—in numbers, at all events—who please me tolerably well. And you—at your time of life one does not travel for pleasure. May I be so impertinent as to ask what your business or profession may be?"

"I don't know that I have any just at the present moment," said Fitzgerald, absently. "I have been thinking of going to America."

"Ah," said his neighbor, regarding him with curiosity. "You know the saying, 'America is here or nowhere.'"

"That is from *Wilhelm Meister*," said Fitzgerald (it was a wonder to himself how glad he was to talk to this old gentleman, in however mechanical a fashion; the journey had been a lonesome one). "And I never could understand *Wilhelm Meister*. But I suppose, as it is an epigram, it must be clever. What I know is that here the government won't give you one hundred and sixty acres of freehold land for five shillings an acre."

"You mean to farm, then? Pardon me, but—but I should not have thought that would be congenial occupation. You spoke of Wilhelm Meister," said the old gentleman, in his precise and courteous way. "What do you think of Werther, then? He was a great favorite among the young people when I was a youth."

"I like him still less," was Fitzgerald's frank reply (though his eyes sometimes wandered away, as though he were looking at other and distant things). "I don't like hothouse sentiment. I don't think a man could go on loving a woman whose eyes were quite cold and indifferent toward him—concerned about bread and butter, in fact. If she had once loved him, even before her marriage, that would have been different. I can understand a man going on through his life constant to his love for a woman who has once loved him, and whom he has lost. I mean," he added, hastily, "by death. I mean one who has been taken away from him by death, and whose memory is a life-long treasure. I don't pity him; I think he is lucky."

"What!" said the old gentleman; "lucky to have lost his sweetheart?"

"Yes, before he found her out," said Fitzgerald, quite simply, and even absently. "Then nothing can upset his idol. She is always beautiful to him, and true; he can have no suspicion of her; and when she has been always good and true and believable, he thinks other women may be. That is something. That is, when she dies in time—before she has degraded herself, before she has shown him what lies womens' eyes can tell——"

"I say, my young friend, that is a very extraordinary theory for one of your age to hold," said his neighbor, staring at him.

The blood rushed to Fitzgerald's forehead; he had been talking almost to himself.

"Oh," said he, hastily, "there is something in what you say about America. Of course one would want a certain amount of capital. But the land along the Platte Valley is excellent; and I fancy that these pre-emption grants are free from taxation——"

"But have you any practical experience in farming, may I ask?" said his neighbor.

Now Fitzgerald was so glad to get away from that other topic on which he had haplessly stumbled that he began and gave this old gentleman a very fair notion of

the state of his affairs—of his struggles to obtain a place in the London literary world, and so forth. He named no names except the names of newspapers.

“It is to me a very interesting story, for a reason I will tell you presently,” said his companion. “May I ask if you chanced to meet Mr. Noel?”

Mr. Noel was the editor of a great daily newspaper in London, and his name was pretty well known.

“No, I never did,” said Fitzgerald.

“Perhaps you did not apply to him?”

No; I had no means of introducing myself, even if I had thought——”

“Ah. Well, you see, it happens that I am one of the proprietors of the —— and I should be delighted to give you a note of introduction to Mr. Noel.”

Of course Fitzgerald expressed his gratitude for this friendly offer, but rather avoided accepting it. He had learned one or two of the lessons of life. His imagination was not so sanguine now. The time was over when a chance conversation in an Irish inn could suddenly reveal to him a roseate path to fame and fortune. And, besides, what would be the use of an introduction? Supposing he were to be allowed to write for that great newspaper, what then? For whom? Toward what end? Who was to care?—He had what money he wanted; the struggle was over; he had no ambition to make his voice heard amid the discordant roar of London, even if it could reach all the way from the solitudes of Boat of Garry.

Nevertheless, he felt very grateful to this old gentleman for the distraction his conversation had afforded during dinner, for it was with a renewed and agitated fear that he passed quickly by the small table in the hall where the visitors' book lay. For one brief second he paused, half determined to brave the discovery, and free his mind from this lurking and intolerable dread: and then again he turned, mastering his vacillation, and resolved to give way to no such weakness. Of what concern was it to him? Let the dead past bury its dead. He had put that black cloud behind him. His business was the present. And here, on this lovely summer evening, amid the quiet beauties of Glengariff, was there not enough to occupy his attention? He would do as these others were doing; only he rather wanted to get away from them and be alone.

He got a boat, told the boatman he might go where he

pleased, and was glad to be away from the shore and in silence. Was it because the silence was so intense, that now and again some air of an old familiar song seemed to come floating across the abyss of time, speaking of other nights and other scenes that his heart remembered? This was not Inisheen; this was Glengariff. Look at the beautiful still bay, at the wooded islands, at the solemn hills. Far up in the northwestern heavens there is still a yellow glow of twilight; here along the shore everything is pale and cold and clear. In under the islands the water is of a glassy blackness; but the ripples catch the glow from the sky, and the black is barred with a faint gold. A heavy splash out there tells that a salmon has leaped; the young herons high up in the trees croak as they are being given their evening meal; in by the rocks, under the bushes, the gray wet back of an otter comes up again and again silently to the surface until he finally disappears. Then they turn seaward (a white ghost of a heron rises from a creek, and shows itself for a second or two crossing the shadows), and make away down by a Martello tower; the night deepening in silence; a faint gray mist gathering along the lower hills; the twilight still strong enough to show, far away, the large mainsail of a yacht lying at her moorings—a phantom thing on the dark expanse of sea. And then slowly home again, over the clear shallows; and as one nears the landing place a slight stirring of wind brings a scent of roses—from the hedge there. It is a gracious evening. The stars come out one by one; the silver sickle of the moon has arisen in the south; there is just enough of ripple along the shores to make a soft and continuous murmur. And the roses make sweet the night air.

But what was this that went through his heart like fire? He was standing by the rose hedge, alone—for nearly all the people had gone indoors—dreamily listening to the low murmur of the water. But this other sound? There were two people coming along the road, and but vaguely seen in the gathering darkness, and they were quietly singing together one of Mendelssohn's duets. Did he not know it?—the pain and the sweetness and the longing of it! And then, somehow, a bewilderment seized him: surely if he were to hasten away at this moment—if he were to hasten away to Cork, and ascend the hill, and enter the small house there, he would find that all this black nightmare of the past few weeks had been a ghastly dream. It could

not be that Kitty was a traitor; that she had gone away from him—Kitty whose eyes had looked into his, who had pledged her life and her love to him in the glen at Inisheen, who had trembled in his arms, and sobbed and kissed him as she bade him good-by at the shore. He would escape from this frightful thing; he would go to Kitty herself. And the next second a sudden strange transformation takes place: he is in a vision; Glengariff has disappeared; he is at Cork; this is Audley Place! Look! he opens the small iron gate, and goes up the pathway, and rings the bell. The sound of the piano within ceases; it is Kitty's footstep that is in the lobby. "Well, sir, have you come for your singing lesson? "I have come for a great many lessons, Kitty." They go hand in hand into the warm little room. Miss Patience is absent; the piano is open.

"Which one?" says Kitty. "O wert thou in the cauld blast?" No; you can manage that pretty well. Some day, when literature gives out, we may have to sing that together in a concert-room; and then you'll see whether anybody else can give you a lead with the accompaniment as well as I can. No; we'll try 'O would that my love were whispered.' Now let my hair alone, and attend to your business; and please don't bawl as if you were at Limerick races, but sing as if you were singing to me—at night—and just us two in the whole world——"

[Surely, if these two people—no doubt young people fond enough of each other—who were at this moment coming along the road to the Glengariff Hotel, could have known what agony they were inflicting on one who wished not to listen but who could not refuse to listen, surely they would have ceased their careless humming of the old familiar air.]

He is standing by Kitty's side. She strikes the first notes of the music; and he loses his voice in hers, so anxious is he to hear her:

"O would that my love were whispered
To thee in a single sigh;
Or murmuring in sweetest music,
On swift zephyr's wing could fly—
On zephyr's wing——"

The music stops.

"Dear me," she says, "what are you doing? What

business have you with that? Don't you see that's mine? I believe you are singing by ear, and not looking at the words at all——"

"They are not worth much when you do look at them, are they, Kitty?" he says.

"That is not my business, nor yours," she answers, with the asperity of a music-mistress. "We have got to sing the duet; you can criticize the poetry afterward. Now you come in at the proper place—and leave my hair alone will you? Miss Patience asked me if I had combed it with a furze-brush the other night. Now——"

And so they finish that verse, and get through the next very fairly. But presently when they come to

"And even in the depths of thy slumber,
When night spreads her shadowy beams,"

Kitty finds herself singing alone. She ceases, and turns round and lifts up her soft pretty black eyes in astonishment and affected anger.

"Well? What is it now? Why have you stopped?"

"It is so much nicer to hear you singing alone, Kitty; I don't want to spoil it."

"Am I to sing a duet by myself?"

"I don't care what it is, so long as you sing it."

"I thought you might have had enough of my singing by this time."

"Perhaps you will be thinking that I have had enough of you?"

"That's what you will be saying some day, at all events," she answers, saucily. "And soon enough. Oh, I know what men are. Singing their lives out over a little bit of your hair; and then you marry them, and before you know where you are they wouldn't walk the length of a drapers shop to buy a pair of gloves for you."

"But you have not been married so very many times, Kitty?"

"Don't be absurd. I speak from observation. And I know you'll be just like the rest. But never mind; it's very nice in the meantime; and you're looking such a bonny boy to-night and—and, in fact, I'm going to be very kind to you, as I always am; and make you miserable; and if his highness will condescend to fetch me that book over there, his humble attendant will sing anything he chooses——"

He places his hand on her shoulder.

"And do you really think Kitty, that we may grow indifferent to each other?"

"Don't tease; but bring the book."

"I want you to look at me and say so. I know what you mean when I see your eyes."

She keeps down her head.

"For I have heard strange things since I went to London; but about women only. I have heard it said that a woman's eyes are always wandering; that if you look down a table d'hôte you will soon find that out; that it is not safe to leave a woman by herself who has a loving heart; that she is likely, in your absence, to become gently interested in somebody else——"

She removes his hand from her shoulder with a quick gesture.

"It isn't true, Kitty?" he says, with gentleness.

"I know the man you mean—and I hate him?" she answers, fiercely.

"It isn't true, then, that women are like that?"

And then—ah! the thought of it!—she leaps to her feet, and seizes his arms, and there is a proud indignation in the white, upturned, quivering face; and there is something like tears in the black soft eyes, and the pretty lips are tremulous.

"Read my eyes, read my heart and my soul, and say if you can think such a thing of me!"

And then— But this dream of what was bygone was like madness to the brain; he could no longer think of it; and happily these two people had passed into the house, and he was once more alone with the silence of the night.

But even here he could find no rest; the darkness was too full of pictures. He passed into the warm light of the hotel, and in the hall met the old gentleman who had talked with him at dinner, and who was now chatting with the landlady.

"Ah, here you are, I see; I have been wondering where you had got to. Here is the letter to Mr. Noel."

"Oh, I am very much obliged to you."

"You will find him a most excellent fellow; and it is not often I try his good-nature in this way."

"I think you are doing too much for a stranger," said Fitzgerald, frankly. "I know something of newspaper offices. I know editors are not fond of letters of introduc

tion. Supposing that I were to begin and pester the life out of this poor man?"

"Oh, I am not afraid," said the old gentleman, good-naturedly. "Something in your conversation at dinner showed me you had an old head on young shoulders. You will see" he added, speaking in a lower voice, and, in fact, in a somewhat mysterious manner, "that I have written to Mr. Noel merely as a friend. There are a number of proprietors, you understand, and as our interests might be diverse, we have agreed never to intermeddle with the conduct of the paper, except on such large points as the board may be summoned to consider."

"I hope," said Fitzgerald, pleasantly, "that the declaration of dividends is one of these large points."

"Marvellous!" said the other, putting a finger on his companion's arm to be emphasize his tragic whisper, "Marvellous. Not a word to a human soul; but last half-year the manager announced to us a dividend of eighty-five per cent. on the original capital! Think of that! Now of course we don't want to intermeddle with a concern that is paying like that; and this note does not recommend you as a writer to Mr. Noel, but merely tells him that I had the pleasure of meeting you at the table d'hote here, that you knew something of literary affairs, and asking to be allowed to introduce you. That is all. You understand?"

"Oh, perfectly. I am very much obliged to you."

"Although I am a pretty withered old stick myself," said the old gentleman, facetiously, "I believe in the infusion of new blood; so does our manager—a most shrewd and excellent man. 'New blood,' I say to him: 'When you can get it,' says he. Now I am off to my final hour at the *Encyclopædia*. Where was I? Oh, yes, at 'London:' the account of the great fire; very interesting, I assure you. But," he added, with impressiveness, "*not too interesting*. I shall not sleep any the less soundly to-night because I have been reading about the baker's shop in Pudding Lane."

"Good-night to you, then," said Fitzgerald.

"But not yet, if you are coming into the drawing-room. Of course you are; there are some charming young ladies there. I have my volume there, too; their chatting or singing does not interrupt me; on the contrary, is it not a pleasant variety to look up from Ancient Thebes or the wars of Alexander and see a nicely rounded cheek and

pretty eyelids bent over a book? I always keep my volume there, though once or twice the wicked young creatures have hidden it out of mischief."

So he went off and into the warm, bright little drawing-room, and Fitzgerald was left in the hall. He had a reason for lingering, which he dared scarcely confess to himself.

"You have a good many people here," he said, cheerfully, to the landlady, or manageress, "for this time of the year."

"Oh, yes, sir. It is rather a favorite time. Many people like to go through and see Killarney while the hawthorn is still out."

He was turning over the visitors' book, his face and manner careless, his heart throbbing with a nameless dread.

"Is Boat of Garry a pretty place?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, sir; I believe so, sir; I have never been there myself."

He did not hear that answer. He had come to three names, two of them bracketed together, all written in the same hand:

Miss Romaine	} Cork.
Miss Patience	
E. L. Cobbs	

He shut the book quickly, without looking round: he dared not show the landlady his ghastly face. He took refuge in the drawing-room, concealing himself in a corner, with his hands clinched on the newspaper he held up before him; the letters he saw before him seemed to be printed in blood. And then there was a kind of suffocation in the air of the place; was not the night hot? Some people were laughing; it was a strange sound. A chord was struck on the piano, and there was silence. Two voices were heard—two girls' voices—one soprano, the other contralto—and what must they sing but "O wert thou in the cauld blast"? His clinched hands were trembling: the agony was too great. But he managed to read on—such reading?—such blind, wild fixing the eyes on words that had no meaning—until the musical piece was finished; and then he slunk out, his face averted, from the room, and found safety and coolness and time to think in his small apartment upstairs.

But even here, as he sat down, strange fancies that he strove to banish came into his head. Why did he look so

intently at the window-sill, at the dressing-table, at the mirror? The mirror can reflect many faces, but no trace remains. This bedroom must have been breathed in by many a visitor; but here was the sweet fresh air of the night blowing in at the open window. What idle fancies were these! The room was but as another room. He got a book, held it up against the light, and began to read.

He read nothing. The window was still open, the soft night air blowing in, and yet the room seemed to choke him. But then all at once he seemed to know that Kitty had occupied this room. She had kissed her lover out there in the passage; she had come in here to be alone with her perjured heart; she had looked in the mirror to see whether her eyes had been lying as bewitchingly as was their wont. These were the eyes with which she had sought him out when, breathless and smiling, she had come down to the Cork station to see him away—glad no doubt, that he was going, and knowing that he would trouble her no more. She had taken back her love, her pledged love, from him; but she could give him a basket, and salad cut with her own hands. Was she not kind? Was she not generous? Had she not a woman's thoughtfulness and pretty consideration and affectionate ways? He could see her smiling, and kissing her hand to him, and waving her handkerchief, as the train slowly left the station: she was thankful, no doubt, she had escaped; she had got through the hypocrisy; her eyes had met his, but he had not read down deep enough, nor seen the treachery of her heart.

The air of this room seemed contaminated; he could not remain in it. Was it on that window-sill there that she had leaned her arms, on the still morning, and looked out? Oh, her eyes were pretty enough; any one passing along the road and noticing her would say that was a charming enough face. Any kisses to sell this morning fair young lady?—it seems that these things are bought nowadays. Is the price high? Must one hail from Manchester, or Liverpool, or some such commercial place, before one can become a purchaser? Hearts, too: do they find quick buyers, seeing they are so easily transferable? Bah!—she is no woman fit for a man's love—throw her out to the dogs, the smirking Jezebel!

He puts down his book; he has not been reading much.

Why this contempt, then? Why this scorn of poor Kitty, who (when she was at Inisheen at least) did her best

to be loving? Poor little Kitty! the small, trembling, overfond heart mistook its strength. No doubt she wished to be steadfast and true. Perhaps she tried for a time. But she was a creature of the sunshine; the warm little heart went dancing and fluttering on; what was it to her that behind her lay a man's broken life?

No, he could not remain in this room: the objects in it were horrible; the air stifled him. He went downstairs again, got hold of somebody to whom he made the excuse of sleeplessness, and so had the door opened, and went out wandering into the darkness.

And now a breeze had sprung up in the south, and all the night was awake. The wind murmured and trembled through the dark branches of the trees: there was a sound along the shore; and the sad mother earth was listening to the wail of her daughter the sea. Only far away in the stars—those calm and shining and benignant orbs—did there seem to be peace, if only one could reach them through the gateway of the grave.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ALONE.

NEXT morning the little old gentleman with the dried-up face and the brown wig was standing in the veranda outside the hotel when the Boat of Garry carriage—a large open landau, with a pair of smart-looking grays—drove up to the door, and Fitzgerald came out. Master Willie, who had been taught by John Ross to observe the expressions of the human face as closely as the colors of palings and Chelsea cabbage gardens, instantly perceived that his friend and patron of the preceding evening was surprised—more than that, that he seemed to have some misgiving.

“This isn't newspaper work I am engaged on at present” said the younger man, promptly, as his luggage was being handed up to the coachman on the box. “I am going as a sort of land-agent or surveyor, to see whether a house and a shooting down here are all right, before they are offered to a tenant.”

"Oh, I see," the old gentleman remarked, as he scanned the turn-out. "He won't find fault with the carriage, at all events. A landau is the proper sort of carriage for this changeable sort of climate; but heavy, eh, on the hilly roads? They seem a strong pair of beasts, though."

"Good-by," said Fitzgerald, as he shook hands with him. "If ever I have the courage to try the newspapers again, I may make use of the note of introduction you were kind enough to give me."

"It will be an easier experiment than going out to Nebraska for your one hundred and sixty acres of land, eh? Don't you think so?"

Then Fitzgerald got into the landau; and when the near horse (whose name he afterwards discovered to be Wellington) had reared and pranced on the ground for a bit, off went both of them like a bolt from a bow, apparently well accustomed to the weight of this spacious carriage. The morning was fine, though there was a strange luminous opacity in the air—a sort of thin sea-fog suffused with sunlight—that hung over the woods and hills like a tender bridal veil. The air was soft to the cheeks; the warm wind was from the south. If this were to be banishment, it was banishment to a very beautiful and gracious part of the world.

And indeed, as Fitzgerald lay back in the soft, blue-cushioned carriage, he had an uneasy sense that the whole performance was very much like setting a beggar on horse-back. He regarded the two white buttons on the brown coat of the coachman, and wondered whether he could not induce the human being within that garment to be a little more companionable, and less elaborately respectful. So he hit on the device of adding a trifle to his Irish accent; and he perceived that, by slow degrees, the coachman, who was a good-looking man of about thirty, permitted a more friendly look to come into his eyes when answering questions. At last Fitzgerald said to him,—

"What is your name, now?"

"Murtough Dunne, sorr."

"But what do they generally call you?"

"Murtough, sorr."

"Very well, then, Murtough, you stop the horses for a minute, and I'll get out and come up on the box, for I want you to tell me about the country."

"As ye plase, sorr."

So Fitzgerald got up on the box; but he knew better

than to begin on the subject of topography. He praised the look of the grays. Wellington, he discovered, was the showier of the two, and always made a little fuss about starting; but Dan was the one for real hard work. Dan had taken the dog-cart sixty miles in one day, over bad country, and was as fresh as paint after it. Dan was his honor's favorite. But indeed—as appeared from hints continually cropping up in this desultory talk about horses, and carriages, and hay, and shooting parties, and what not—his honor, that is to say the late owner of the place, seemed to have had a great many favorites, both among the human beings and the animals around him, and to have left behind him a reputation for constant kindness and consideration. He was quick-tempered, it appeared, but his wrath was over with a word, and there was nothing the people round about would not do to serve him and to please him.

“That made it easy for the keeper, then?” said Fitzgerald. “No trampling of nests in the spring, no chasing of leverets by the dogs?”

“True for you, sorr,” said the coachman. “There was John O’Leary, up at the Knockgarven farm, and he had a dog—sure, sorr, there never was such a rascal for hunting and worrying and shtaling both bird and baste. What does he do but bring down the dog, wid a string round his neck, and ties him up in the yard, and laves word for his honor to shoot him or drown him as he plased. ‘Bedad,’ says Micky——”

“But who is Micky?”

“Sure the keeper, sorr. ‘Bedad,’ says he, ‘his honor will do neither the one nor the other whin he comes home; and wid you lave I’ll get rid of the baste myself.’”

“And I suppose the gentleman up at Knockgarven expected a little compensation?” Fitzgerald said suspiciously.

Murtough grinned, and said nothing.

“How much was it?”

“I tink it was tree pounds, sorr, his honor gave him, and the cur not worth the sound of a sixpence!”

In this way Fitzgerald managed to obtain a large amount of information about Boat of Garry and its neighborhood, and the long drive through occasional woods, or along high and stoney hill roads (with always the far Atlantic in the south), was rendered cheerful enough. He made it a matter

of business to obtain these particulars. He had undertaken a commission, as it were. And he tried hard to devote his whole time and thinking to this duty, so that amongst inquiries about the price of oats, and the probable introduction of hay-drying machines, and the different kinds of nails for horseshoes, and so forth, other and less immediate things might be definitely shut out and forgotten. Was not this a new and strange experience for him—to be installed as master of a house that he had never seen? How would he get on with the other people about? This man seemed civil and honest, and was now rather more friendly, while always preserving a careful respect. And he could report that he at least had not been neglectful of his duties: the horses seemed in excellent condition; the metal of the harness was brilliantly polished; the carriage throughout was as spick and span as it could be—much more so than is at all common with carriages in remote parts of the country where they get rough and constant usage.

By and by, however, the sunlight seemed to withdraw itself from the thin mist; it grew darker a little; then the moisture in the air was felt in points; at last a fine rain began to fall.

“Will your honor be for going inside now?” Murtough asked.

“Oh no,” was the answer. “But I will hold the reins while you close the carriage. I know the south of Ireland. Besides, I have a waterproof.”

And very soon he had to put on that waterproof; for the soft small rain now fell steadily, and the outlines of the hills and the reaches of the lake were blurred over or altogether invisible, and the skies were growing dark. Murtough had a waterproof also, but he did not seem to think this rain sufficient to injure his livery. So the pair of grays trotted on monotonously, or splashed through puddles; and the rain fell more slightly or more closely as the clouds came drifting over from the hills; and all the time Fitzgerald was interesting himself in particulars about the Boat of Garry household, or asking the name of this or that feature in the ever changing and widening and dripping landscape.

At length there was a sharp dip down from the high-road, and they passed through an avenue of trees. Here the landau dragged heavily through the mud, and there was a pattering of big rain-drops from the branches. Then they

swung into the open again, passed through an open iron gate, drove briskly along a pathway of wet gravel, and drew up at the door of the house of which Fitzgerald was to be the temporary master.

It was a plain, square, two-storied building, with an unpretentious porch of wood and glass. The shrubbery around and the bit of lawn looked trim and well cared for; there was no sign of neglect about the place. And when, leaving his dripping waterproof in the porch, he walked into the hall, and then into the dining-room (where there was a fire, despite the fact that the weather had been unusually warm, even for the first week in June), everything around seemed neat and clean and well looked after. There was not the slightest air of neglect about the place; on the contrary, one would have expected a trim house-mistress to make her appearance to welcome the visitor. There were preparations for luncheon on the table. There was a pair of slippers on the fender. Beside the easy-chair at the corner of the fireplace stood a smaller table, on which some books and old magazines were methodically arranged.

"I beg your pardon, sir," some one said at the door.

The voice sent the blood to his heart—it was so like another voice that he now regarded as being beyond the grave. He turned quickly. But this person was merely a quiet-looking, rather pretty young woman of about six or eight and twenty, whose black hair and blue eyes made him conclude she was Irish. But then he recollected. Was not this the English maid whose fellow-servants, according to Mrs. Chetwynd had considered to have made such a frightful *mesalliance* in marrying the good-natured Irish coachman?

"I beg your pardon, sir," said she, in very pretty English. "I was having your things taken upstairs. Would you please to have luncheon now?"

"Oh yes," he said, "any time. I am in no hurry."

"I hope you will find everything to your satisfaction sir,——"

"Oh, I am sure of that. I am not particular."

"If you would be so kind as to tell me anything you would like different, we could get it. We have had two letters from Mrs. Chetwynd, sir, and Mr. McGee has been here several times. I hope you will be comfortable, sir."

"Oh, no doubt, no doubt. You are Mrs.—Mrs. Dunne I suppose?"

"Yes, sir. My husband said this morning he thought it would rain; and so I had the fire lit, sir, in case you might have some things damp."

"Oh, thank you, but I don't think there will be any need to keep up the fire in this warm weather."

"Thank you, sir," said she, and withdrew.

He went to the window. It was a pretty place despite the wet. It was so quiet and still that you could not well tell whether the continuous *sh—sh—sh* outside was the falling of rain or the murmur of the brooklet that splashed along unseen behind the bushes at the foot of the lawn. The rain, too, had made everything look even more richly green than it normally is at this time of the year, from the luxuriant rhododendrons, whose glossy starlike leaves were all shining wet, to the belt of trees, maple and chestnut and ash, that made a circle round the place. But through these trees there were spacious openings, and through some you looked in one direction over broad meadows and one or two patches of wood, while in another direction a broad pale silver streak between the foliage showed where the shallow waters of a creek came up from Bantry Bay. And always in this loneliness was the murmur of the rain, rising a little as the wind stirred in the branches, and then again subsiding into a sort of semi-silence, in which one could hear the sharp twittering of birds or the lowing of kine at some distant farm.

Again there was a knock at the door, and he started. He wished this woman's voice had not that peculiar tone in it. He wished she had the croak of a raven. Was it not enough that this soft veil of rain was but as a screen that seemed to hide behind it the fancies and visions and pictures of other days? That is the saddest thing about rain; it makes the landscape look far away; it invites the imagination; the world looks vague—just as the ghost of a woman's face may look, if you think of it through tears.

"Come in," said he, sharply.

It was Mrs. Dunne; and there was an older woman visible, bringing some things to a table in the hall. He turned to the window again.

Presently that pretty, startling voice said,—

"Luncheon is served, sir."

"Thank you," said he, thinking she would go.

She remained, however, standing behind the empty chair. He went and took his seat.

"I beg your pardon, sir," she said, "but will you have champagne or claret? I have not opened the bottle yet. Mr. Frank had sometimes the one and sometimes the other."

At this Fitzgerald flushed like a schoolboy. How could he explain to her that he was not Mr. Frank; that he was much more of a fellow-servant with herself? It was clear that these instructions from Mrs. Chetwynd and from Mr. McGee were putting him into an altogether false position.

"But I am not at all used to such luxury, Mrs. Dunne," said he, good-naturedly. "Is there any beer in the house?"

"Oh, yes, sir; I will fetch some. And they call me Kate, sir."

When she returned with the ale, and put it on the table, he said (without looking up),

"Thank you, Mrs.—Mrs. Dunne; that is, if you don't mind—if it is the same to you—to have that name, from a stranger, you know. And I would not trouble you to wait. I am sure there is everything here. If I want anything, I will ring."

"Thank you, sir," said she, with the same pretty politeness, and then she stirred the fire, and left the room.

As he sat, moodily and dreamily, at this far too copious banquet, it seemed to him—or perhaps it was only a bit of sarcastic phantasy that he played with—that women were by nature really kind and thoughtful and considerate so long as you had nothing to do with their affections, when they were as the tigers that slay. Think of Mrs. Chetwynd's solicitude about his welfare, her repeated injunctions, the proofs being visible on the table here at this ordinary mid-day meal. He, as well as any, and better than most, knew with what trouble and even difficulty many of these things must have been procured at a remote country house in the south of Ireland. Think of the anxious kindness of this poor creature, who would have him consider himself quite as much at home as Mr. Frank. Kitty, even when her heart had gone away from him, when her eyes were smiling only to deceive him and get rid of him, she must needs rob herself of half her night's rest for the purposes of cooking, and come rushing and panting to the station with the salad that her own hands had dressed. That was the mission of women, then? There they found themselves at home, were natural and trustworthy? There they were truest to them-

selves? It was an odd theory; but he left the food before him almost untouched, and went to the easy-chair and lit a pipe, but soon dropped that on the floor and went fast asleep, for he had not closed his eyes the whole of the previous night.

He was awakened by Kitty's voice (as he thought in his dream), and he sprang to his feet, with his face white.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, sir," said the English maid-servant, about to withdraw.

"No, no; what is it, Mrs. Dunne? Do you want to take away the things?"

"It is only Micky, the keeper, sir, who would like to see you, sir. But any time will be convenient——"

"Where is he?"

"In the kitchen, sir."

"Tell him to come along now, and we will go and have a look at the kennel."

"Very well, sir."

Micky, or Mick, as he was generally called, proved to be a smart-looking, clean-built young fellow of about two and-twenty, with reddish-yellow hair, ruddy brown eyes, and a face that could express more than his tongue. For he had come from one of the westernmost distincts in Kerry, and his English was somewhat scant. Fitzgerald, on the other hand, had almost forgotten what little Irish he ever knew; so that the conversation that now ensued in the hall, about cartridges, and the cleaning of guns, and what not, was conducted with a good deal of guessing on both sides. However, Mick showed himself shrewd enough; he quite understood Fitzgerald's monitions about the importance of keeping on good terms with the farmers and shepherds around; and when, in the little gun-room, they turned over the various drawers and cases and so forth—sad enough relics these were of the dead man—it was very clear that he had done his best to master his trade. The guns had been beautifully cleaned, and carefully oiled and put away. Such cartridges as were there were well made. Not only that, but some sea-birds stuck up along the wall were of Mick's own stuffing; and they were very fairly done, considering the difficulty of the performance. Master Willie had found a companion just to his mind.

"The loicense, sir?" said Mick, as if his clear brown eyes conveyed all the rest of the question.

"Yes, what?"

" 'Twas Mither McGee was axing would it be a gun loicense or a kaper's loicense he was to be getting for me."

" What had you before? "

" Sure I had the kaper's loicense ; but Mither McGee was saying mebbe you'd be shootng all the toime yourself, sir, and what would I be after wanting the game loicense for? "

" What did you use it for before? "

But this took Mick some time to explain ; the fact being that " his honor," as every one except the English maid-servant called young Chetwynd, had been away frequently during the shooting season, and on that account the keeper had had a license to kill game, so that an occasional hamper could be sent to London. Fitzgerald said he would have to settle that matter afterward ; and together they set out for the kennel through the silent thin wet that seemed to hang in the atmosphere like a vapor.

He spent about an hour in the kennel and stable, and then returned to the solitary room, and got a book, and sat down to read in the melancholy silence of the rain. But he was restless. The type before him got into a fashion of fading away, and pictures formed themselves in its stead. This would not do.

He threw down the book, and went out and put on his shooting-boots and leggings and waterproof. Then he got out the fishing-rod he had brought with him, and jointed it together on the lawn. Then he got his fly-book, and chose indifferently the first cast that came to hand, which he twisted round his hat. Thus equipped, he set forth through the shrubbery, and made his way to the side of the small but rapid stream that came down from the hills through the valley to the salt-water of the bay.

He had not stayed to ask what chances of sport there were. But the throwing of a fly would be sufficient occupation, he thought ; one could not stay indoors the whole afternoon ; besides, there would be practice—in case he might happen on some better fishing elsewhere.

So he made his way through the rank tall grass and herbage (the best shooting-boots in the world could not keep out the wet) until he reached the side of the stream, and there he put on the cast, and with a short line threw the flies on the swirling water. It very soon appeared that if he only wanted to exercise his skill he would have ample opportunities, for the streamlet was narrow, long weeds

grew down to the very edge, the water was rapid, and in the first three casts he got twice caught up. But when he had chosen his position better, and was a little more careful, he soon found himself catching fish; that is to say, small brown trout of about four to the pound. It amused him, and did no harm to them; nay, perhaps it was a benefit to them, for when they were flung in again they had learned a lesson in life, and would be more cautious in the future. And to him there was a certain variety in the occupation besides merely trying to dodge the tall weeds. To get at some of the pools and reaches of this sharply curving river he had to cross necks of land that were obviously covered at very high tides with the sea-water, and as these contained a considerable number of deep peaty-looking holes partially concealed by the long grass, there was a possibility of his finding himself any moment up to the neck in mud. So he kept on, on this sad, dull day, with the soft rain continuously falling, discovering new pools, hanging up on weeds, landing small fish, and leisurely throwing them back again, until,—

Yes, until there was a sound that made his heart jump—the shrill whir-r-r-r of the reel! Up went the top of the rod, out went the butt, in a moment. Then he saw his opportunity. He floundered down through the bushes, and got into one of the shallow reaches of the river, where the water was not up to his knees; here he could deal with his enemy face to face. The fish had at first banged away down stream, but was now sulking under a bank; so he cautiously waded and waded, winding in his line the while, and keeping as heavy a strain on as he dared. If this was a grilse or sea-trout making its first experiment into fresh-water, he knew very well that it was as likely as not to resent this treatment, and make a bolt back for the sea. And now there came between him and his prey a bend of the river where the banks came close together, and he was afraid it was too deep for him to wade. The fearful uncertainty of that moment! Look at the danger of getting on either bank—scrambling up among the tall weeds—if the fish should just choose that precious point of time,—

Suddenly there was a slackening of the line, and for a wild second he saw a blue and white thing flashing in the air, and splashing down again on the water. He dipped his rod. Quickly and sharply raising it, he felt no harm had been done. But now the line was appreciably slackening

again, and as he rapidly wound it in, he found that the fish was heading up stream, and must be approaching him. This was a serious situation. At last the rod was nearly vertical, though he was winding as hard as he could to get the strain on again, and he was anxiously looking at the point. Just at the instant of his greatest endeavor he joyfully felt the strain returning—nay, he had to release his grip of the handle of the reel; he merely kept his forefinger on the line, ready for any emergency—and then with another great whir-r-r away went the fish again, round a turn in the bank; and the next thing he knew was that his rod was quite limp and vertical in his hand, with the line, minus the cast, flying high and idly in the air.

So far from disheartening him, however, this put a new aspect on affairs altogether: and he thought that the best thing he could do before risking any further and similar losses was to go straight away home, and sit down, and thoroughly overhaul his fly-book, and see that his casting lines were in good condition. This, when he had changed his wet clothes, he proceeded to do; and the table in the dining-room was pretty well covered with fishing material when the English maid-servant entered.

“What would you like to have for dinner, sir?” said the young woman.

“I do not care. It appears to me I have dined already, Mrs. Dunne.”

“Mr. Frank used to dine at seven, sir.”

“Very well, seven, if you like. But please don’t take so much trouble as about luncheon: I am used to very simple fare.”

“I am sorry we can’t get any game at this time of the year, sir.”

“Well, I know that.”

She lingered and hesitated for a second or two.

“I wish, sir—I beg your pardon, sir—but would you be so kind as to speak to Micky?”

“What is it now?” said he, looking up for the first time—for he had been busy with his flies.

“The Fenians, sir. Some of them have been down here, and they are frightening the poor boy. He does not want to join them: but they have been threatening him—yes, and threatening the house, sir—if he does not join them.”

“Send him to me, Mrs. Dunne. I know the fellows.”

Presently Micky appeared at the door of the dining-room, anxious-eyed.

"Are there any Fenians about here, Micky?" said he, pulling at a casting line. Kate Dunne was listening the while, though she pretended she was getting out the dinner things from the sideboard.

"N—no, sir."

"I'm glad of that," said Fitzgerald. "I come from the Blackwater, and we know how to deal with them there. If any of the idle blackguards—I say if any of the idle bligards," he repeated, looking up, and speaking with more significance, "should come bothering about here, and trying to get decent young fellows into trouble—getting them to drink whiskey, and march about at night—you come and tell me. While I am here I won't have any strangers come prowling about—do you understand, Micky? Wasn't it you made up the No. 4 cartridges?"

"Sure it was, your honor."

"Well, now, its one or two of the No. 4 cartridges that I keep in my pocket at this time of the year, just for anything that may turn up; and I generally have a gun handy, especially at night. Now, d'ye see now, if I catch any idle vagabond interfering about the place, and threatening anybody, or talking about his marching and his countermarching, I'm not going to wait to ask him his business; it's the Queen's guinea to a quid o' tobacco he'll get a charge of No. 4 shot catching him up behind; and ye weighed the shot yoursilf, Micky, and sure ye know it 'll make the bligards jump."

Micky went away deeply impressed. That Irish way of talking carried conviction with it. He sought out his friend Murtough, the coachman, and after a second or two of thoughtful silence, he said:—

"Sure 'tis the new master can spake his moind. Blood and ounds; but I hope there'll be no murther about the house."

In the evening Fitzgerald dined in solitary state, the pretty house-maid, very quickly perceiving that he preferred to be alone, leaving things about handy, so that he could help himself. Thereafter he smoked and read. Toward nine or so she again appeared, bringing in the spirit tray.

"Thank you," said he, looking up in a bewildered kind of way (for he had been vaguely dreaming as well as reading), "I don't want anything more."

"If you would rather have brandy, sir," said she, "I think there is some."

"Thank you, but I never take spirits."

"Oh, indeed, sir. I hope you will find your room comfortable, sir. You will find a candle on the hall table."

"Thank you very much."

"Good-night, sir."

"Good-night to you."

So thus had passed the first day in this new neighborhood, and it had not been uninteresting. He was not thinking of any work now; he had no thought of turning these fresh experiences into literature. Nor had he any reflection that this place, so remote, and still, and silent, and beautiful, was just the place where Nature, if she were communed with in her mysterious haunts, might reveal her subtler secrets to the listening and sorrowing soul. No; he had got through a sort of day's duty, and that had kept him from thinking much, which was his chief good at present. He was glad to be able to do something in return for the Chetwynds' kindness. No doubt his being there and occupying the place would reconcile the old lady to the idea of letting it. He would be able, he hoped, to give a good report of both house and shooting. And no more than the man in the moon, it may be added, had he the slightest conception of the purpose Mrs. Chetwynd had in view in begging him to be so kind as to pay a visit of inspection to Boat of Garry.

CHAPTER XXV.

GLIMMERINGS.

HE was soon to have an inkling of that, however. After having been some little time in this still, silent and beautiful place, occupied mostly in taking long and solitary walks by sea and shore, he wrote as follows to Mary Chetwynd:—

"BOAT OF GARRY.

"DEAR MISS CHETWYND,—In the last letter I had from Hyde Park Gardens your aunt seemed to think it quite enough if I remained here enjoying myself in idleness; and

the temptation to do that is sufficiently strong; for it is one of the most beautiful neighborhoods I have ever seen, and the people are very friendly. I think I ought to remind you, however, that if you wish to let the house and shooting, it would be easier to do that now than later on; and really it seems a pity to think of such a place remaining vacant. I am afraid a good many of the young birds were killed by the heavy rains in the early spring, but in some cases there are second broods in the nests; and there will be plenty of hares. Every one says the winter shooting is most excellent, though Mr. Chetwynd does not appear even to have spent a winter here. Everything about the house, as I wrote to your aunt, seems well managed—the horses in excellent condition; the dogs not so good, as far as I can judge (the tenant should bring a brace of thoroughly trained setters with him); and the new boiler will be in the steam-yacht next week. As to the prettiness of the place, of course you know about that as well as I; but if I hear of any photographer coming through by way of Glengariff to Killarney, I will take the liberty of getting him to come down here and take one or two photographs. These would not cost much, and they would help you in letting the place.

“Yours faithfully,

“WILLIAM FITZGERALD.”

This was the answer :

“HYDE PARK GARDENS, *Sunday Evening.*

“DEAR MR. FITZGERALD,—I am in deep disgrace. Your letter seemed to me so reasonable that I thought I would venture, in the most roundabout way, to make the suggestion. Well, auntie, as you know, is not the kind of person to get into a tempest of indignation; but I could see she was really pained at the notion of taking money for poor Frank's place, and that she regarded me as a most unfeeling and wicked creature. Of course I did not press the matter. I suppose I was premature. But what I really do believe auntie means to do with Boat of Garry is to ask you to take it—probably with the name of Chetwynd as well. Perhaps I should not mention this project to you, for I have no authority; but auntie has been talking about it to Dr. Bude (who is a great friend of yours, by the way); and if he advises yes, the least you can do will be to send him some game. Auntie appears to wish that in the mean-

time you should wait over for the shooting, unless you find the place intolerably dull; and we both hope you find the house and the neighborhood to your liking, and that if you are writing any more papers like the 'Woodland Walk,' you won't forget to put something about Boat of Garry into them.

"Yours sincerely,

"MARY CHETWYND."

"P.S.—After all, on reflection, it seems to me that auntie may be right. I am afraid I should not like to think of poor Frank's place going away into the hands of perfect strangers. But as this is a mere piece of sentiment, I am not going to interfere in any way, or give any advice.
"M. C."

When he read this letter he was seated on a rocky knoll high up on the hillside, whither it had been brought him by a boy. Far below he could see the small house ensconced among the abundant foliage; the trim lawn, the belt of trees, the spacious meadow outside, and the curved arm of the sea—a silver white—that swept round as if to enclose the whole. Was it not a beautiful picture, then, under these skies of June—a desirable enough possession? Here, indeed, was a vale of Avoca, where one might pass the peaceful years away, quietly and equally, with the friends one loved best. But strangely enough, he looked on the place with no longing eye. He did not crave for the shelter, the snugness, the indoor affections, of a house. Here, alone with the sad hills, and the clouds floating in from the Atlantic, he was more at rest. He watched the great and mysterious shadows moving along, and those hills growing darker and grander, or disappearing altogether behind the folds of vapor, and slowly revealing themselves again in altered lines; and in the face of this mighty phantasmagoria, human life, with all its fears and ills, seemed a petty and trivial thing. He watched the great gray sea darkening or lightening with the lowering or the lifting of the heavy skies. And sometimes, as it seemed to him, there was a sudden vision overhead, a break in the pall of white, and a glimpse into a far and unknown realm of intensest blue; and then a warmth and a golden glory spread around him on the herbage and the rocks; and the clear singing of a lark sprang into the silence, far away

down there over the waterfall and the glen; and the sea air coming over from the south grew so balmy and soft that it was delicious to breathe: one turned one's throat to it, and the touch of it on the cheek was like the touch of a velvet glove.

Look, now, at this new companion of his. In the perfect stillness of sea and sky and land, and while his eyes are far away, some quick movement near at hand tells him that he is not alone. A small rabbit, the very tiniest of baby rabbits, a ball of brown fur, has come quietly along, all unconscious of his presence until it is within three yards of him. It trots here and there, with a leisurely, ungainly tripping, nibbling the grass now and again, never looking up. And then suddenly it stands still; and the fat little ball of fur has great staring eyes—staring with observation, not fright, for very likely it has never beheld a human being before. The big, flat, gray eyes regard him unwinking; there is no movement. Then, with a little forward jerk of the head, up go the long ears; and again the motionless staring. Then up goes the baby rabbit itself on its hind-legs, the fore-paws comically drooping; and again the steadfast stare at this immovable strange creature seated on the rock. Then by some accident he inadvertently stirs a hand or a foot—the eighth of an inch will do it—and at the very same instant the earth is left empty; there is only a glimmer of white disappearing into the brackens a dozen yards away.

By and by he makes out another living object, apparently not much bigger than the baby rabbit, coming up the hill by the side of the narrow glen, and as he makes no doubt that this is the same boy sent up with another message, he rises, puts the letter in his pocket, and proceeds to descend. Sure enough, the shock-headed gossoon has a message; there is a gentleman waiting for his honor. What gentleman? He does not know. Did he come in a dog-cart with a white horse? That he did. And then Fitzgerald knows that Mr. McGee, the Bantry solicitor, has paid him another visit, and hastens down through bracken and over stone walls until he reaches the road sweeping round to the house.

This Mr. McGee was a big, burly, good-natured kind of man, with a sort of sporting air about him, who had really gone a good deal out of his way to make Fitzgerald's stay at Boat of Garry pleasant for him. And his present

mission was to say (with profuse apologies for delay) that at last the steam-yacht, the *Black Swan*, as they called her, had got her new boiler in, which was to increase her speed by two miles an hour, and all she wanted now was to get in a few tons of coal and a store of oil; and would he, that is, Fitzgerald, care to take coach and rail to Cork, and make the trip in her from Cork Harbor to Bantry Bay?

"Oh, no; no, thank you," said Fitzgerald, hastily.

"Sure it would be as safe as sitting in chapel," said Mr. McGee, with a good-natured laugh. "We'll wait for smooth wather; and if there's too heavy a swell when we come to Cape Clear or the Mizen Head, can't we run back and put into Glandore?"

"It isn't that," said Fitzgerald. "I don't feel inclined to go to Cork just at present."

"I was thinking 'twould be a bit of variety for ye; for divil the much there is to do about here at this time of the year."

"The fishing is capital."

"The fishing!—the fishing, did ye say?"

"If you like to wait for lunch, you'll have a bit of a three-pound sea-trout I caught in the stream there only yesterday afternoon."

"D'ye say that now? It's myself has tried it half a dozen times, and I might as well have been throwing a fly into my grandmother's taypot. But faith I'll stay to lunch wid ye, and give the ould mare a bit of a rest."

Master Willie did not say anything about the number of trout to be found in the adjacent stream; but, at all events this particular one proved to be most excellent, and Mr. McGee proceeded to make himself very much at home.

"Katie, darling," said he to Mrs. Dunne when she brought in the beer, "isn't there a glass of whiskey about the house now?"

"I beg your pardon for forgetting," said Fitzgerald; "but really I am not sure who ought to play the part of host."

"Well, many's the evening I've spent in this very room with the poor boy that's gone; and a pleasanter companion or a finer gentleman there was not in the country," said he. "Thank ye, my good gyurl; and isn't there a drop o' hot wather about now? Well, sir, ye've a good ould Irish name, and I hope ye'll have a happy stay among us; an' niver fear, ye'll be mighty plazed with the *Black Swan*

when we get her round, and sure ye'll be able to run up to Glengariff whenever ye want, and the divil sweep her if she doesn't do her ten moils an hour."

The quite novel excitement of meeting a stranger had almost driven the contents of Miss Chetwynd's letter out of Fitzgerald's head; but when, after luncheon, they went out to the seat fronting the lawn, and had coffee there on the little marble-topped table, and lit their pipes, the quiet charm of the place again stole over him, and he could not help for a moment wondering what his sensations would be if he were really the owner of such a delightful spot. Of course it was out of the question. A more preposterous white elephant could not be imagined. Where could he find money to keep up such a house—to pay wages and find provender for the horses? It was like offering a crossing-sweeper the use for the season of a three hundred ton yacht. Indeed, he so clearly saw that this could only be regarded as a sort of pretty sentimental fancy on the part of Mrs. Chetwynd—as something so obviously outside the limits of practical possibilities—that he was very nearly mentioning it to this good-natured lawyer; but as Mr. McGee had for the moment dropped into a snooze, he forbore, and finally concluded he would say nothing about the matter.

The quiet was enough to send any man to sleep. The day had brightened up; there were wider deeps of blue between the ribbed white clouds, and the mellow sunlight fell warm on the meadows and on the lawn, on the glancing, trembling green of the broad-leaved limes, and on the still yellower green of the drooping foliage of a swaying acacia. The air was soft and warm, and yet moist, and it was pervaded by a scent of all growing things—a general, vague, delicious perfume that perhaps came chiefly from the lush grass there not yet cut for hay. A curlew or two were stalking along the shore, where the bold white cimeter of the sea came in between the meadows. A blackbird shot through the rhododendrons, and the silence seemed to miss its suddenly closed song. But there was always the plash and gurgle of the stream at the foot of the lawn, and sometimes the distant bark of a dog or the rumbling of a cart spoke of a life far remote from this enchanted enclosure that seemed to be given over to sunlight and peace and the growing of green leaves.

The lawyer awoke with a start.

"Begorra!" said he.

“You were saying,” observed Fitzgerald, just as if he had not been asleep at all, “that she was registered up to eighty pounds on the square inch; but of course the boiler has been tested beyond that——”

“Faix, I believe I’ve been asleep,” said Mr. McGee, rubbing his eyes. “’Tis no wonder, when ye get out of the world. What will ye be afther doing now all the afternoon?”

“I? I am going down to the stream to see if I can’t catch another sea-trout for my dinner.”

“Good luck to ye, thin; and I’ll go and get the mare out, for ’tis a mighty long drive to Bantry?”

So that unusual feature of life at Boat of Garry, a visitor, disappeared, and Fitzgerald was left to the solitude and silence and dreamy loveliness of the place. In the afternoon, however, he caught a good sea-trout, and also a brown one of about three-quarters of a pound—a fair size for this small stream. And again he had dinner by himself; and thereafter he smoked and read as usual. By and by, when the moon was clear on the gravel-walk, he stole outside; he had got into a way of doing that. The servants thought the new master merely wished to have a breath of fresh air, after the smoke of the dining-room, before going to bed.

And perhaps it was only that. He walked along the gravel in the clear light (though the moon was now waning), and he listened to the croak of the heron and the cry of the curlew down by the sea. He went along to the road, climbed over a wire fence, and made his way up a steep bank where there was a clearance among the trees. When he got to the top, he was on the side of a deep and almost black chasm—the wooded glen through which came down the little brooklet that passed by the end of the lawn. And there he sat down on the stump of a felled tree, and looked around, and was alone with the night and the stars, and the moonlit world.

This glen was smaller and narrower than the one near Inisheen, but it was a far more lovely place; for above and beyond it towered dark hills, rising far and solemnly into the clear night sky. There was a more spacious view, also, of this broad silver creek running out to meet the wide waters of Bantry Bay, and of wooded islands and long promontories, and of the dusky shore beyond, that seemed to lie behind the moonlight, and was half lost in shadow. Night after night he climbed up to this spot; and of course

it was merely to look at the beautiful picture, and to listen to the strange, sad, distant sounds in the stillness. Sometimes a faint perfume of the sea came, borne along by the slight stirring of a breeze; sometimes, in a dead calm, before any wind was moving, he thought he could hear a trembling of the great deep in the darkness, and a whisper along the shore. Sometimes, moreover, as he sat there, with the silent hills above, and the great sea beyond, a wild fancy got into his brain that he could hear a voice in the sound of the stream below—the stream down there in the dark; it became quite plain: a human voice—so strange, so strange and clear: *Over running water: my life I give to you.* The voice sounded quite close. All trembling, he would bend his head forward: might there not be two people there? or only one voice?—the voice of a girl who was dead, and gone away from the world—a young girl who used to be associated with all young and beautiful things, like hawthorn and blue speedwells and sunlit mornings, when there was a freshness in the air? And then again there would be nothing but the aimless and meaningless murmur of the stream down there in the ravine; and the awful hills and the sombre sea would have no speech or message for him; and what was the use or value of this throbbing, fretting, tortured insect life between the dark dead world and the cold and distant and pitiless skies?

CHAPTER XXVI.

TO THE RESCUE.

ABOUT this time there began to appear in the columns of a London daily newspaper a series of articles which very soon attracted the attention and curiosity of the public. They were a new feature in journalism; some went the length of saying that they were "a new feature in English literature. They were called "The Occupations of a Recluse," and professed to give some account of the various pursuits incidental to a quiet country life; but they were in reality a description of solitary rambles by roadside and sea-shore and stream—a succession of carefully studied out of door scenes that had a quite unaccountable charm about them. For this way of describing nature was not the poet-

ical way of bringing together similitudes, saying that one thing is like another thing, and inviting the imagination to hop the little differences. Nor was it the other way of giving an honest and trustworthy catalogue—a gamekeeper sort of catalogue—of the phenomena of the hedge row or the wood, leaving the reader who has sufficient time, training, and patience to fill in the light and color and background of the picture for himself. No; there was something strange in this way of looking at things. There was a minute observation, it is true, put down in the simplest of terms; and there was a certain atmospheric quality that made the picture clear and vivid. But there was more than that: there was a kind of sensitive, pathetic thrill in the writing: these sights and sounds that were so quietly and unobtrusively chronicled seemed interpenetrated by a subtle human sympathy—rather sad, perhaps, in certain of its under-tones. Indeed, to some it seemed that this writer had got behind the veil; that even the sticks and stones and flowers had whispered to him in his solitude; that the silence of the hills had reached to his heart. And very soon—as we shall see presently—he began to abandon even the pretence of writing about definite pursuits. The further he was allowed to drift, the further he drifted, until the papers grew to be mainly the reflections of a man who, whether it was a gun he held in his hand, or whether it was a fishing-rod, or whether he was merely looking abroad at mountain and shore and sea, continually found himself face to face with the mysteries of the world, and with the old and sad and insoluble problems of human existence.

Of course such a series of papers looked odd—at the outset, at least—in the columns of a London daily newspaper. The editor of that journal was himself at first very doubtful; but something in the writing struck him, and as his time and attention were then wholly engrossed by a cabinet crisis, he shoved the manuscript into his pocket and took it home, and showed it to his wife, who, when all his anxieties and interests were confined within the sphere of politics, acted for him as the mouthpiece of the vain clamor of the other and outer world. Now this lady happened to be a person of a very keen discrimination in literary matters, and when she had read the first two of these papers her judgment was prompt and decisive.

“This writing is quite extraordinary,” said she. “There

is a description of a frosty night settling down over a stretch of bog-land that made me shiver to my fingertips."

"It is not news, and it is a newspaper we publish," said her husband, doubtfully.

"I should not care whether it was news or not," said she, "so long as people are interested."

"It is very magazinish," he said.

"Why should the magazines monopolize literature?" she answered.

Well, the experiment was made, and the public, who don't care a pin's point about the traditions of newspaper offices, seemed to like these quiet and clear pictures of country life, and began to talk about them even amid the throes of a cabinet crisis. At first, it is true, they were more obviously practical. There was a good deal of information about dogs and guns, about rabbit-snaring and deep-sea fishing. Even the good Scobell was driven to send for a file of this journal (which he did not regularly see, as it did not express his political views) as he took his seat in the library of his club one evening after dinner; and so charmed was his imagination with some of these sketches that he suddenly exclaimed, "Damme if I don't take a shooting in Ireland this year!" at the same time bringing down his fist on the table, to the excessive alarm of three old gentlemen, who had each been fast asleep in his favorite arm-chair, and who started up to see if the world had come to an end.

But as has already been hinted, this new writer by slow degrees seemed to feel that he was being allowed a good deal of latitude; and he took advantage of it to frequently wander away from the ostensible purpose of these articles, and to insinuate, rather than to state, a sort of philosophy of human life which had some odd points about it. He seemed to say: "In this strange transit through the world, from the unknown to the unknown, where should one most naturally look for safe and close companions whose intimacy could not be filched away from us or altered by the fluctuating circumstances of life? Surely in the grand and beautiful things around us which we know to be permanent. The time is so short, why seek to probe the unsearchable mysteries of the human heart; to secure and imprison the elusive; to stake one's happiness on so unstable a foundation as human affection? Is there anything so variable, so liable to change—nay, to cease? But if the beautiful things of nature were to become our friends and loved

ones, then securely year after year could we greet the reappearance of the flowers; and securely day after day could we welcome the wonder of the dawn, and listen to the murmuring and soothing voice of the sea, The friend whom we had trusted might disappoint and betray us; loving eyes might grow cold, and take away their love-secrets elsewhere; but he who had chosen the winds and the seas and the colors of the hills for playmates and constant companions need fear no change. The beautiful human face would fade—nay, death might step in and rob us of our treasure; but the tender loveliness of the sunrise remained, and the scent of summer woods, and the ripple of the rivulet down through the spacious meadows. But then this companion had to be wooed before it was won; the secret voice had to be listened for; the eye trained to know this wonderful and not evanescent beauty. To such a lover, secure in his possession, what evil could fortune bring? Friend and sweetheart might prove false, but there was no discordant note in the music of the lark; the suspicions and envies and enmities of mankind might appall, but there could be nothing to doubt in the clear, beautiful blue eye of the speedwell; and even those who had lingered in the fight until sorely stricken there might find solace in retiring to these solitudes, and seeking out these secret companions, letting the seasons go by peacefully to the appointed end. *'Then are they glad because they be quiet; so He bringeth them unto their desired haven.'*"

All this was insinuated rather than preached; and it was only here and there that some finely attuned ear caught the under-note of sadness, and perhaps guessed at its cause. Of course the bruit of these articles reached the house in Hyde Park Gardens, and Miss Chetwynd, who was not a diligent student of newspapers, and had, in fact, missed them, had to hunt them all out one afternoon and read them over to her aunt. What surprised her was that mere sketches of sport, as they seemed, had the effect more than once of giving her a choking at the throat; but nothing was said by way of criticism either by aunt or niece, for the reading was just finished by dinner-time.

At dinner Miss Chetwynd herself introduced the subject, and asked if any one knew who had written these papers.

"I don't," said Dr. Bude; "but what I do know is that it is a thousand pities that fellow is thrown away on literature. Literature does not want him. Science does

I can assure you, my dear Mrs. Chetwynd, that an accurate observer is a very rare bird indeed—far more rare among men of science than is supposed. There are so few who will take the trouble to look patiently; they must jump to their theory at once. What does literature want with that kind of observation? Literature should deal with the mind—with emotions. That fellow, now, should be set to work to observe the habits of beetles or birds, or the action of the tides, or some useful thing like that.”

“I confess I was disappointed, after all the talk,” said Professor Sims, looking over his gold spectacles. “I glanced at one or two of the papers, and found them inconsequential. You began with wild fowl shooting, but got on to Shakespeare and all kinds of things. Then he seemed to me to be interfering with the proper business of the artist—describing what ought to be painted. What is the use of describing the silvery waves that wind makes on a field of long grass. Every one can see that for himself.”

“Every one may not be in a position to see it,” said Miss Chetwynd, in her gentle and yet pointed way. “This is bringing the picture in-doors for you.”

“That is not to be described in words; that is for an artist to paint,” continued the professor.

“Could he?” she said, quietly.

“But there is something to be said,” Dr. Bude interposed again, “for his theory that the eye should be trained to observe the beauty of all manner of simple things, so that you may increase the value of life. That is practical and sensible, it seems to me. Even if you don’t give science a lift, you can make a country walk more interesting. He seems to have picked up some curious illustrations of the morphology of plants. And I had forgotten, I confess, about the abortive stamens of the prinrose. You have read these papers, Mrs. Chetwynd?” added the tall, lank, dark man.

“Mary has just finished reading them to me.”

“What is your opinion, then? What is the writer? A man of science excusing himself for idleness? a philosopher taken to shooting snipe? or an artist taken to literature because his pictures won’t sell.”

“I am sure I don’t know,” said the old lady, rather hesitatingly, and with none of her usual sprightliness. “I was thinking when Mary was reading them that—that if my poor boy had taken to writing, most likely that was the kind of subject he would have chosen to write about.

I liked the papers. They seemed a little sad sometimes—at least wistful and strange. There is a kind of remoteness about them.”

“What is your opinion, then, Miss Mary?” he asked.

Mary Chetwynd started slightly; she had been listening with downcast eyes.

“I?” said she, somewhat slowly. “What I think is that they are written by a man whose heart is broken.”

Indeed, she seemed preoccupied during dinner; and when the people had gone she went quickly back to the drawing-room, where she had left the cuttings from the newspapers, and set to work to read them carefully over again. Her aunt followed her in a short time, and found her deeply engaged.

“You have no more of the newspaper articles to read, have you, Mary?”

“No; I was only looking over them again.”

By and by she looked up; but the old lady could not see that her niece seemed a little agitated.

“Auntie, surely you must know who has written these papers?”

“I, child?” said Mrs. Chetwynd, absently. “Well, I was dreaming about them. I think he might have written them.”

“But, auntie, don’t you recognize the place? It is Boat of Garry.”

The old lady sighed.

“Yes, that is what he would have written about, no doubt—the place he was so fond of.”

“But, auntie, these articles are written about Boat of Garry. Don’t you recognize it all—the creek, and the glen, and the islands, and the sea? Why, the acacia on the lawn is there; and the little marble-topped table: it is like a photograph. Mr. Fitzgerald has written these articles.”

“Mr. Fitzgerald? Yes, I should not wonder,” said the aunt, though she was obviously still thinking of the nephew whom she had lost. “He is very clever. I suppose he began to write early. I suppose it wants training. But I think—Frank—could have written them.”

“What I am thinking of is this, auntie,” said her niece, with some touch of feeling in her voice, “that if these articles are written by Mr. Fitzgerald, we have no right to ask him to remain in that loneliness. I—I suppose he must have met with some sorrow; there it is in every line. I say we

have no right to ask him to remain there. I am certain he wrote these papers. Didn't you see the reference to the heronry at Glengariff? and he has put in Berehaven as clear as can be. And if—if he is in trouble, no matter what it is, it is not for women to let him be there all by himself, eating his heart out in solitude. It isn't human. I'm sure I never thought how solitary the place would be if one were there alone until I read those articles—we always had plenty of society. It must be dreadful: doesn't it sound dreadful, auntie."

"Oh no, Mary; he seems so pleased with the birds and the different things around him— So you think that is Mr. Fitzgerald? Dear me! he has become quite famous, though no one knows his name."

"They'll know it soon enough."

"And that is his life at Boat of Garry that you have been reading to me? Yes, it is like the place, too—the gun-room even, and the stuffed birds. You must read them all over again, Mary. Then it was he who saw the young rabbit trot along and tell its father and mother? That was very prettily written; now that I think of it, it must have been in the wood beside the glen, just over the wire fence; I wonder I did not notice before how like it was to the place.

"But you don't seem to understand what I say, auntie; you are so full of dreams and pictures; and I am in the main responsible for Mr. Fitzgerald going to Boat of Garry, and—and something has got to be put right, auntie."

"Well, then, child, I don't know what you mean, I confess it," the old lady said.

"Mr. Fitzgerald told me something," said Miss Chetwynd, with an unaccustomed flush on the clear-cut, intelligent face, "before he left for Boat of Garry, and I guessed more. Do not tell him so, auntie—don't breathe a word of it—but I fancy he has been in some trouble, and that solitary place must have been a dreadful place to be in. I should have thought of it. It was my fault. But I thought if he were there for a time you would get accustomed to the notion of some friend or other occupying the place, and then that you might let it."

"I have asked you not to speak about that Mary. I can have only a few years to live; and if for that short time I choose to do what I wish with my own——"

"Auntie dear, don't speak like that to me," the girl said, going to the old lady and putting her hand on her

shoulder. "Surely you know it was not for my own benefit that I thought of it. It is not money that is likely to come between you and me, I hope."

The aunt took the girl's hand and patted it.

"No, no. You are a good child. I wish you were more saving with your money. Now what is it you want me to do?"

"One of two things, auntie dear. After reading these papers, I am quite distressed to think of Mr. Fitzgerald being there in that loneliness he describes; and I want you to ask him to come back at once."

"Child, I want him to have the place. To whom else could I give it? Who else could have found out the charm of the neighborhood and written like that? No; I have thought over it, Mary. I could neither sell nor let Boat of Garry; and I would not have it go to the Lawrences, to have all those ill-bred young cubs stamping through my poor Frank's rooms; and what good would it be to you?—you would marry and give it away to somebody I know nothing about."

"If you please, auntie dear, what I have is quite enough," said the tall young lady, somewhat frigidly.

"Oh yes, I know; and anything more you might have you would fling away in Whitechapel," said the old lady, with a smile. "Well, then, why should Mr. Fitzgerald come back? Why should he not become familiar with the place? Why should he not stay for the shooting?"

The niece remained silent for a minute or so.

"Well, then, there is another thing you must do," she said. "I think you and I might go over to Boat of Garry."

"To Boat of Garry!" said the old lady, rather faintly.

"Very shortly now," said Miss Chetwynd, cheerfully, "everybody will be leaving town, and my poor old auntie will have nobody to bring her all the wicked gossip. Why should not we go too?"

"To Boat of Garry, child?" said the old lady, almost reproachfully.

"It is not like you, auntie, to think of refusing to comfort a friend in distress," said her niece.

"But what do I know of his distress? And what could I do, since I am not to breathe a word about it?"

"Well, auntie, I will tell you the truth," said the girl, frankly. "My conscience is not quite clear. I was mainly responsible for the arrangement; and I am afraid we

have been rather cruel. I should like to see how things are going at Boat of Garry; perhaps there will be no need for us to remain; we could pay a short visit, and then go on to Killarney. I should feel more at ease. I am afraid Mr. Fitzgerald has got into a sort of morbid state through being all alone there. That may be very good for his literary prospects, and people may begin and talk about him now and make him famous; but I would rather have nothing to do with the great god Pan and his fashioning of the reed by the river."

"You are asking a great deal from me, Mary," said Mrs. Chetwynd, after a while.

"I think I am asking what is right, auntie."

"It will be all the old sorrow over again," she said, absently.

"Oh no, auntie, not that; it will only be beautiful memories now. I am sure you would like to see Dan and Wellington again, and Murtough and Kate, and the Ghoul, and old Father Time, and the children up at Knockgarven."

"It is a terrible thing going into an empty house, child."

"Oh, but it won't be empty, auntie!" said her niece, cheerfully. "We will have the Ballykilloge Barrys over to show Mr. Fitzgerald, if he is to have the place, what it can contain; and we must drive to Kenmare to see the old General; and wouldn't Murtough be glad to take us on to Killarney?"

"I never thought to see Boat of Garry again," said the old lady, wistfully.

"Indeed, auntie, if I were going to be so munificently generous as to make a present to a friend of a house and garden and shooting lease, and horses and carriages, and all the rest of it, I do think I should want to see how he liked the place, and if he was properly grateful. How do you know that Mr. Fitzgerald would take it? How do you know but that he sees nothing in the neighborhood?"

"You can judge by these articles," said Mrs. Chetwynd; but there was a yielding smile on her face.

"You will be able to judge, auntie, when Mr. Fitzgerald drives us from Glengariff; and then you will see whether we have been too cruel in condemning him to such a solitary banishment. Now that's settled, auntie, and there is not to be another world"

CHAPTER XXVII

AT BOAT OF GARRY.

MARY CHETWYND read and re-read the "Occupations of a Recluse" until every searching and sensitive phrase seemed to find an echo in her heart; and when at last, one morning toward the end of July, she found herself standing at a window in the hotel at Glengariff, looking out on the beautiful calm bay and the woods and the mountains, it almost appeared to her as if a dream had become a solid reality. For the recluse had written a good deal about this neighborhood, though not specifying names; and she recognized the place now, not as she had known it in former years, but as transfigured by the new light and color he had conferred upon it. It was the dream-picture become real; here were all the points of it—the rose hedge, the little landing-stage, the wide water, the Martello tower, and the far ranges of the hills. The place had a strange interest for her. It was something other than the Glengariff that she used to know.

Her aunt came into the room.

"I wonder whether Mr. Fitzgerald will come with the carriage," said the niece.

"I have been wondering," said the old lady, doubtfully, "whether we should tell him that we know of his having written these articles."

"It can not be long a secret; everybody is certain to find out."

"It needed the interposition of a cabinet minister before we could make sure," said the aunt, however.

"I was sure from the beginning, auntie. It was only you who must needs go and get Dr. Bude to beg Mr. — to ask the editor of the *Daily Mirror*. And all that trouble for nothing—you ought to be ashamed of yourself, auntie. Any one could see the papers were written about Boat of Garry."

"Scold yourself, Mary Chetwynd; don't scold me," said the old lady. "There was no trouble about it. You remember what Dr. Bude said the moment I asked him?"

—that it was difficult for newspaper editors to get at the secrets of cabinet ministers, but that the reverse of the process would prove to be easy enough. And a pretty thing it would have been if we had come all this way on a mission of charity and compassion, and found that it was not Mr. Fitzgerald at all who had been writing in the newspapers. What would you have said then?"

There was a rumble of a carriage below in the road.

"Oh, auntie, come quick!" the niece cried. "Here are Dan and Wellington, and Murtough; and here is Mr. Fitzgerald too. But what is he doing on the box?"

The old lady went to the window; and when she caught sight of the empty carriage, she inadvertently put her hand on her niece's arm, without saying a word. Then she turned away, her eyes full.

"Oh, I know," said Mary Chetwynd, cheerfully (though in her heart she guessed that Fitzgerald had out of delicacy refrained from presenting himself to the old lady as the occupant of her nephew's place)—"I know. Of course you must see the scenery so much better from the box. Of course that is it. Now, auntie dear, are you quite ready? Are all your things sent down?"

"I think so, Mary," said Mrs. Chetwynd, when she had recovered her composure. "You—you must make apologies to Mr. Fitzgerald for our interrupting him. We sha'n't stay long. He may have his own friends coming for the shooting. We don't want the carriage to take us to Killarney, if you wish to go back that way. We can hire."

"I don't think you would get Mr. Fitzgerald to agree to that, auntie," the younger lady said, quietly.

Fitzgerald was in the hall when they went downstairs; and he came up and shook hands with them, and said that their luggage was all in the carriage, and were they ready? In this partial dusk he did not seem changed at all, except perhaps that his manner was somewhat grave. And he rather avoided observation, as it were; he waited until they went out, and then followed.

But when Mrs. Chetwynd and her niece got into the carriage they found that the main part of their luggage had been placed on the two seats opposite them, leaving no further room. The Boots of the hotel shut the door.

"Leave 'hat open," said Miss Chetwynd, almost angrily. "Murtough, why is all the luggage down here? Mr. Fitzgerald, they will make room for you in a moment."

"Oh, thank you," said he, going round to the other side. "I will get on the box."

"Certainly not," said she, with promptitude. "You must have seen everything that is to be seen about here many a time. Murtough, take these things up beside you. See, Mr. Fitzgerald, here is your seat cleared. Don't you think that auntie and I have had enough of each other's company during such a long journey? And we have all the gossip of the neighborhood to get from you. I suppose old Father Time has a dozen more complaints about the Knockgarvan children?"

So Fitzgerald had to take his seat inside (the previous arrangement had been a cunning device of his own), and away they drove. For a time there was a little embarrassment. He was unaccustomed to new faces; he would rather have been on the box. Then Mrs. Chetwynd had got it so clearly in her mind that he was already the actual owner of Boat of Garry that she kept making little ingenious excuses for their intrusion. But very soon the light and pleasant humor of Mary Chetwynd, and the clear frankness of her eyes, dispersed these awkwardnesses, and Bantry Bay and all its surroundings began (for him, at least) to assume quite a new and cheerful aspect. Boat of Garry, too: did he not know that the old gardener, with his stoop, and his long hair, and his scythe, was familiarly spoken of as "old Father Time"? Had he not observed how Ghoul-like was the engineer, stoker, and captain of the *Black Swan* when he raised his head, all smothered in coal dust from the yacht's bunkers, and glared through his huge brass-rimmed spectacles? This landau: had no one told him it was properly called "the Ark," especially in wet weather, when its vast capacity could have transported half the neighborhood safely through the rain? Perhaps he had never heard of H. M. S. *Coalscuttle*? At all events, she said, she was pleased to see that the Ghoul had not blown him into the air.

"I think it is very wicked of Mary," said the old lady, "to come and throw ridicule on everything, and make you think light of the place. Perhaps—perhaps it is from old association, but I consider Boat of Garry very pretty."

"Who could say otherwise?" he answered. "It is a beautiful neighborhood."

"But a bit lonely?" said Mary Chetwynd, timidly.

"Oh no."

She raised her eyes in astonishment.

"You don't find it lonely?"

"Not in the least," said he, simply. "I mean—that is—well, perhaps it might be called lonely; but I find the solitariness of it its chief charm, I think."

She was silent for a second. Then she said, good-naturedly:—

"Auntie, what do you think of that as a compliment? Why, Mr. Fitzgerald, we thought—we imagined—that you might be rather lonely here—and—and we thought of giving you the pleasure of our company for a week or two—I mean a few days——"

She was clearly embarrassed; but there was a humorous smile on her face all the time. Then she looked up with her frank clear look.

"I will confess the truth, Mr. Fitzgerald. My dark and nefarious scheme has failed. Auntie won't let Boat of Garry."

"I don't wish it even talked about," said the old lady, but without sharpness.

"And so you see all my plotting and counter-plotting has only ended in your having been banished away from human-kind for all this time."

"But Boat of Garry is not such a howling wilderness, Miss Chetwynd," he said, with a smile. "Humanity exists there as elsewhere; and human—folly, shall we say? You don't know what tragic passions may be smouldering in all that quiet. Murtough," he said, lowering his voice somewhat, "has discovered that a man at Adrigole made Kate an offer of marriage before she married Murtough——"

"I know she came to me about it. Why did the stupid girl not tell her husband? What harm was there in that?"

"Why, none. Only the pitiableness of it," he said, absently. "It is merely the old story. When you see three jackdaws flying along together in springtime you know what a story of jealousy and hatred and madness that means, and how one poor chap is doomed to an inevitable fate. But it appears that the gentleman from Adrigole, having recently taken to drink, and idleness, and Fenianism, and so on, is now desirous of renewing his acquaintance with Kate; so there is to be a tremendous head-smashing when he and Murtough meet."

"I will put an end to that," she said, promptly, "for I know Pat Carey's master."

"I am afraid Pat Carey hasn't any master to speak of now," said he. "But Murtough can hold his own."

For a time there was silence; and only the driving through the delicious air; and the opening out of the beauties of the far-reaching bay. Mary Chetwynd was afraid she had said too much about his loneliness. She could not explain to him, here and now, what she had been guessing about him from these writings. She had been listening to inner secrets when she was reading those papers. Now everything seemed so ordinary and matter of fact—as he pointed out where the coal smack had come to grief, or asked Mrs. Chetwynd if she had read Professor Sims's lecture, or got Murtough to stop the carriage so that he could get out to walk a steep part of the road. And yet, sometimes, when he was absently looking away over the wide expanse of water, there was a look in his eyes that told her something she had only imagined, and that convinced her that this visit on the part of her aunt and herself was not so much amiss.

When they swept round the gravel-drive and drew up in front of the house, it was Miss Chetwynd's aim to make a rare bustle, so that her aunt should have no opportunity of indulging in sad recollections. Sure enough, here was old Father Time, with his scythe, just finishing off the lawn; and here was the pretty Kate, all smiling and pleased; and Tim was sent to bring the dogs; and the Ghoul was to be summoned to report about the new boiler. But indeed Mrs. Chetwynd did not seem to mind as much as had been expected her entering this house. It was far from being an empty house. Everything was noise and turmoil and confusion. And when at last something like order had been restored, and when the three sat down to lunch, Mrs. Chetwynd, so far from being dejected, said with a smile on the pretty, bright old face.

"Why, Mary, this is quite like old times."

The luncheon was not a sumptuous one; but the old lady was obviously highly pleased—with something or other.

"Your telegram, Mrs. Chetwynd, came late last night," Fitzgerald said, "and I had to get away early this morning, or I should have tried to get you a sea-trout, or a brace of wood-pigeons, or something."

"Oh, but this will do capitally," she said. "If Kate would only let us have some wine. I hope you found the wine to your liking, Mr. Fitzgerald?"

"I—I have no doubt it is excellent," said he, flushing somewhat.

"But you don't mean to say you have not tried it—all this time?" said she, staring.

"The beer is very good indeed," said he evasively.

The old lady looked at her niece, as if to say, "There is something to be amended here"; but she said nothing.

Then she began to cross-examine him about his impressions of the place, and his pursuits, and so forth, just as if she had never heard about the "Occupations of a Recluse." Did he like the situation of the house? The shooting promised to be good this year? And how about the winter—would it not be a terribly dull place in winter? And she was very much surprised that he had not made any use of the *Black Swan*.

"I don't know much about steam-yachts," said he, "but I suppose it costs a good in coals before you can get steam up?"

"A trifle—a mere trifle," she said. "Surely it was not that that hindered you?"

"I thought if you were letting the place, it might be as well to have a full stock of coals in the boat," said he.

"Never mind, auntie," said the niece. "You and I and Mr. Fitzgerald will all have a famous trip to-morrow, if the day is fine, and we will see what the new boiler can do."

"Not I," said the old lady, with decision. "You two may go if you like. I wish to end my days in a peaceable kind of way."

"Mr. Fitzgerald," said Miss Chetwynd, "have you ever steered a small steam-yacht?"

"I have never been on board one."

"Well, the sensation will be a new one for you—you must not miss it. You will have the pleasing impression that a wild beast has run away with you, and that you haven't the least notion against what it is going to rush. Then the Ghoul is generally below at his fires; and I suppose you don't know much about the navigation of Bantry Bay?"

"Nothing whatever."

"That is still more excellent," she continued, gravely

“And when you see the finger of the dial informing you that you are about twenty pounds above the registered pressure, you don't know how to let off the steam, I suppose?”

“Certainly not.”

“Capital!—capital! It will be the greatest enjoyment of your life. The Ghoul will be below; pressure will be 100 pounds on the square inch; the wild beast will be running away with you; and you don't know where the rocks are. And yet they say that Boat of Garry is a sleepy, unexciting sort of place!”

“If you don't mind, Miss Chetwynd, I would rather leave the management of that wild war steed to you.”

“To me? Oh, no. When there is a man on board, of course the man steers. It isn't a woman's place.”

“But suppose the man prefers to stay on shore?”

“Then you are afraid?”

“Yes, I am.”

“I thought men never acknowledged that.”

“It does not much matter whether they acknowledge it or not. If you put a man on a railway engine, and start it, and send him careering along the line without any power to stop, and then if you ask him whether he is quite happy, and he says ‘Yes,’ you can judge for yourself whether he is a truthful person.”

“Besides,” continued the young lady, in the same calm and placid manner, “you know you have to get the yacht out of the creek first; and the deep channel is about a dozen yards wide; and it twists between rocks; and the currents are fearful.”

“Mary Chetwynd!” said her aunt, angrily, and then she turned to Fitzgerald. “I don't know what has got into her head, but she seems determined to put you out of conceit with the whole place. The yacht is as safe as sitting in that easy-chair—why, look at the new boiler! And it is most delightful to be able to go away on a perfectly still day—when an ordinary yacht would be unable to move—and go as far out as you please, and have luncheon there, and come back just when it suits you. I would go with you myself to-morrow—”

“Only—?” said the niece.

“Only what?”

“I wanted to know what the excuse was to be this time, auntie dear,” said the imperturbable young lady.

"But I mean to go," said Mrs. Chetwynd, valiantly.

"Now you know very well, auntie, you are as sensitive as a cat, and the least speck of dirt on your face or on your hands makes you fidgety and miserable; and when H.M.S. *Coalscuttle* does take it into its head to throw up a cloud of wet soot at starting—"

"But we can go below until she has started," the aunt said.

"Who is to steer, then?"

"Tim can steer."

"He knows no more of the rocks than the man in the moon. Besides, would you miss the expression of the Ghoul's face when he gets to the Narrows?"

"Come away, Mr. Fitzgerald," said the old lady, "and we will have coffee outside. If you stay here any longer, Mary will persuade you that sea air is poisonous, and that Boat of Garry is celebrated for small-pox."

Now this fighting, which had been brought about of set purpose by Mary Chetwynd, had the desired effect of tying down the attention of the old lady to the affairs of the moment; and it was wonderful with what little concern—how easily and naturally—she now took her accustomed seat on the bench outside the porch and looked around. The ordeal she had feared was no ordeal at all. She was regarding the trim-cut lawn, and the masses of rhododendrons, and the openings through the trees which revealed glimpses of the sea and distant hills; and she was thinking that for a man of letters no more desirable haven of rest could have been found. Was it a wonder that he had written those charming papers in this dream-like quiet? The world seemed filled with sunlight here; and yet there was a slight cool breeze coming over from the sea to temper the heat; and as it passed along it stirred some lime-trees down there by the rivulet, and the sweet scent was all around. And the old lady was very pleased to see the place looking so beautiful; and she was pretty sure in her own mind that a contemplative student would be glad enough to have it as a gift, and to remain there for a portion of the year at least, and do the best work of which he was capable in it, and perhaps also submit to be bothered—for a week or two in the summer—by a visit from two idle women escaping into this gracious quiet from the clang of London life.

Occupied by this pleasing fancy, the old lady, accompanied by the two younger people, now set out on an in

spection of the place. Father Time received high praise for the condition of the garden. Then they visited the kennel, and the stables, and the fowl-house, and what not; and, as the day was so beautiful, Mrs. Chetwynd said she thought she could walk as far as the shore, and have a look at the *Black Swan* lying at her moorings.

But to do this they had to return to the house and take a road leading somewhat inland from the marshy stretches lying alongside the creek; and they were leisurely walking along, chatting, and watching birds and butterflies and so forth, when Fitzgerald suddenly discovered that right ahead of them, at some distance, stood the Knockgarvan bull, calmly contemplating them, and apparently disposed to contest their right of way. It was an awkward, even a serious, situation. He knew the beast and its ill temper, and had, indeed, passed it several times, though on these occasions he had been accompanied—as was his wont in going about—with one or other of the dogs, and when there is a dog about, the bull does not pay much attention to its master. However, now there was no help for it; there was no gate for the two women to go through, no wall for them to get behind; and he knew very well that the first symptom of fear or retreat would be the first inducement for the bull to pursue. Moreover, he dared not even tell his companions of their danger; for he was afraid the old lady might scream and try to run away, and there was absolutely no shelter. So he continued talking in a loud and unconcerned way, carefully keeping a short distance ahead of the two ladies.

“Oh yes, Mrs. Chetwynd,” he was saying (with an anxious eye on the bull all the time), “that purple loosestrife is a very handsome plant when you see it growing by the wayside—very handsome—yes—splendid color out of doors——”

Here he had come within stone's-throw of the bull which stood immovable but for the angry flapping about of its tail. He picked up a pebble and carelessly shied it at the animal.

“Get out of that!” he growled, with apparent indifference, and forthwith continued his talking.

“—but it is worth nothing indoors. It does not tell in a room. It loses the pink and becomes purple. I told Tim to cut a lot, and meant to put them in the dining-room when you came; but I found they would not do——”

Here the animal gave a low, warning bellow ; but there was nothing for it. He kept on talking ; always a little ahead of his companions ; and he knew the time was come, for good or ill.

“Mr. Fitzgerald,” said Mrs. Chetwynd, anxiously, “hadn’t we better go back——”

“Oh no,” said he, carelessly. “Come along. It is only one of the Knockgarvan beasts strayed down from the farm. *Get out of the way, will you ?*”

He lifted this time a big stone—what in those districts is called a rock—and pitched it at the brute, intending to miss him. By dire mischance the lump of stone landed on the animal’s nose ; and Master Willie’s heart at the same moment leaped to his mouth, for he was convinced that the beast would not endure such an insult. But slowly and sulkily, and with deep mutterings and flapping of the tail, the coward brute yielded its dignity, and crossed a ditch, and went into the adjoining pasture. Fitzgerald was much too prudent to try a repetition of the stone-heaving. He let well alone.

“I was saying,” he continued, as if nothing had happened, “that loosestrife isn’t good for lighting up a room. Fox-gloves are better ; but even they are too purple. Now a splendid show of wild flowers is to get the marigolds that grow in the corn here, and mix them up with meadow-sweet——”

He cautiously turned his head ; the bull—at some distance—was regarding them, but evidently not inclined to follow. In a few more minutes they were down at the little landing-slip ; and here was the Ghoul, otherwise, Sheil Glanny—a great, awkward-looking man, with bushy black hair and brass-rimmed spectacles—seated on the beach, tarring a broken-down old punt.

“Sheil,” said Fitzgerald to him, under his breath, “haul in the boat there, and I’ll row the ladies out to the yacht. And then you’ll go back to the house, and tell Tim to bring a couple of the dogs along the road, and drive the Knockgarvan bull up to the farm. And you’ll tell him to tell the boy that the next time he lets the beast go wandering down here like that, I’ll come up with a stick and beat him till he’s black and blue.”

“Sure I’ll do it mesilf now, sir,” said Sheil, looking about for an instrument.

Then it occurred to Fitzgerald that this was a most

injudicious threat, seeing how near the shooting season was.

"No," said he; "Tim is to give the boy this shilling, and say I am much obliged to him for keeping his dog from hunting; and, while the ladies are here, would he see that the bull is kept up at the farm?"

"Well, well, sir," said Sheil, going away rather down-faced, and no doubt thinking that it was throwing away a shilling when a beating would have done as well or better.

So Fitzgerald got into the big boat, and rowed the two ladies (he noticed that Mrs. Chetwynd kept a hand tightly grasping the gunwale all the time, though the water was like glass) out to the *Black Swan*, and got them on board. She was a smart enough looking yacht of about fifty feet in length, with a small cabin aft, and a larger one forward; and as there was a pretty strong odor of new paint about, it was clear that Sheil Glanny had been occupying his spare time usefully. Indeed, so anxious did the old lady seem that Fitzgerald should express approval of the little yacht that even her niece refrained from making disrespectful comments; nay, she even undertook to make a cup of tea for them, until she found that all the small lockers were locked, and that there was neither tea nor anything else to be got at on board.

"I think she is a beautiful little boat, and very handy and convenient," said Fitzgerald, to the old lady's great delight. "I had no idea there was such room in her. Why, half a dozen people could sleep on board. And with that twisting channel down at the mouth of the creek, a sailing yacht would never be able to get in here. To-morrow, then, Mrs. Chetwynd, would you like to take a trip? for I will tell Sheil about getting up steam."

"If—if you wish it," said Mrs. Chetwynd, rather doubtfully.

"Don't drive auntie into a corner," said the niece, laughing. "She would be trembling all the time. No; she shall come down to the beach; and I will go with you, if you like, for I know the way down the creek; and we will have a short run out and back, and pick up auntie again. How will that do?"

"It will do very well," said the old lady, "if you are not in one of your scornful moods. But when Mr. Fitzgerald knows you a little better, he will know when you are speaking the truth and when you are not."

When they got back to the house again (there was no bull to contest their passage this time) Fitzgerald took out his fishing-rod, and said he was going down to the stream to see if he could get a sea-trout for their dinner, while the two ladies had tea brought them to the little table outside the porch.

"Mary," said Mrs. Chetwynd, after a time—what a beautiful, quiet, golden afternoon it was!"—"I wish you would write to Mr. McGee, and ask him to come over and see me. Or we can send up the yacht for him, if that will suit him best."

"Very well, auntie," said the younger lady, dutifully; "but I think you are making a mistake."

"Why?"

"I have seen it brewing all day long. The place looks pretty; Mr. Fitzgerald is pleased with it, and you are proud of it—and you have gone back to your old notion of giving it to him."

"Well?"

"What would he do with it? He has no money to keep it up, as poor Frank had. You couldn't expect him to live here all his life, in any case—a young man like that, with a great career before him. Why, you'd never even have the satisfaction of seeing him to let him say 'Thank you' for your kindness. Besides, I wouldn't trust the conveyancing of a valuable property to Mr. McGee."

"Really, Mary," said her aunt, with a little laugh, "you must have been thinking about it as much as I have all day. But some of your objections meet each other. I don't want Mr. McGee to convey the property, but to come over and make a calculation as to what would be necessary to keep it up as it stands. When I present a picture I like to present it framed. And then, no doubt, if what people say about these writings is true, no doubt Mr. Fitzgerald would have to live a part of the year in London; and I am sure you would be as glad to see him as I should be, for the more I see of him I like him the better; and—and in a measure I should like him to be to us what—what my poor boy was. Well, that means money. That means an allowance, Mary. Do you think he is not deserving of it?"

"I wouldn't say that, auntie dear. But all the deserving people don't meet with such a kind friend. I suppose he will continue to write. You know, auntie—now don't

be cross, for I am only talking common sense—I think you were too good to poor Frank; and many a time I wished he would give up his hunting, and come and do some kind of useful thing.”

“Now, Mary, that is enough,” said the aunt, but without anger. “We are not all reformers and politicians like you. If my poor boy pleased himself, that is enough for me; that is what I like to think of. But there’s always good sense in what you say, Mary. Of course I should not dream of making Mr. Fitzgerald such an allowance as would make him independent and careless. Oh no. But I think I can trust the lad. I like the look of his eyes. And if he can not be everything that my boy was to me—well, at my time of life one is glad to be able to do what kindness one can; and I don’t see any one else to whom I would rather give Boat of Garry.”

The niece was silent for a little while.

“Auntie,” said she at length, “if you are quite resolved upon this, will you allow me to tell him to-morrow?”

“Yes. Why not?”

“There are one or two things I should like to say to him—if you don’t mind.”

“Why not? Who knows all the circumstances of the case better than you? Well, now Mary, I am going to my room to lie down for a while; but you may come and knock at my door before dinner.”

Master Willie was not fortunate that afternoon, for there was not a breath of wind, and the surface of the pools was like glass; and he was returning to the house rather disheartened—not knowing that the Ghoul had got two splendid flounders, a cod, and a skate in his drift-net, and that Tim, who had been sent up the hill, was bringing back a brace of mountain hares and a couple of teal—when he met Miss Chetwynd. She was trying to plait rushes, and not succeeding very well.

“Mr. Fitzgerald,” said she, looking up with those clear blue-gray eyes of hers, “was not that rather an ill-tempered bull we met this afternoon?”

“It does not like strangers.”

“And we were in some danger?”

“Well,” said he, hesitatingly, “something might have happened.”

“I thought so,” she said, regarding him. “And yet you would not tell us we were in danger.”

“What would have been the use? I should only have frightened your aunt, and made more mischief.”

“If my aunt had not been there, would you have told me?” and for a second her frank, shrewd, inquiring eyes met his.

“Yes, I think I would have told you,” he said.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE BLACK SWAN.

MARY CHETWYND'S manner was ordinarily marked by a perfect ease and simplicity; it seemed to suit the sincerity of her eyes; women noticed it, and found her companionable; sick children were glad to be nursed by her; poor people did not become self-conscious when she entered their door; at her aunt's table she spoke to guests and servants in precisely the same voice; she had the same smile, the same frank look, for every one. All this pertness of humor she had displayed since their arrival at Boat of Garry had been assumed; but it had answered its purpose; the old lady had taken quite naturally to the place; there were no fits of despondency or gloomy reminiscences. But when she herself drew near the true object of their visit, she became more grave, and again and again found herself wishing that these explanations were well over. At all events, chance provided her with an ample opportunity of making them.

Next morning Mrs. Chetwynd had almost resolved to go on board the *Black Swan*, and even went down to the shore of the creek with them; but at the last moment she changed her mind, and said she would go to the hill above the house, from which she could see them sail away out into Bantry Bay and back. But this hesitation had caused delay; and when at length Miss Chetwynd and Fitzgerald and Tim, the keeper, got on board the little yacht they found the Ghoul in a state of great excitement and impatience. There was a rapid ebb-tide running; steam was up to within five pounds of the extreme registered pressure; the donkey-engine was rattling away as if it were in a tir

box ; and Sheil Glanny was here, there, and everywhere—at the moorings, at the furnace door, at the waste-pipe, at the coals. And then, before Fitzgerald fairly knew where he was amid all the uproar, he found himself with a rope in his hand, and the rope was attached to a hauling and jerking and throbbing iron tiller, and he knew that the *Black Swan* was forging ahead just anywhere, for the condensers had not arrived, and he was enveloped in steam, not even the bow of the boat being visible.

“Miss Chetwynd,” he called aloud—for the Ghoul was down in the bunkers again—“have you any notion where we are going?”

“Not the least,” said she. “But Tim is at the bow.”

However, the steam abated, or else the wind freshened ; at all events, he began to get glimpses of his surroundings, and strove as near as he could to keep this raging little beast in mid-channel. And what a noise it made!—or rather a succession of noises, each distinct, and each sharply following the other. And then there was still another—a sudden, brain-dividing shriek, twice repeated ; and he saw that Miss Chetwynd had hold of the brass chain of the steam-whistle.

“That is a signal to auntie : do you think she will hear?” she said—or shouted.

“Hear?” he answered. “They will hear it at New York. I believe you have killed every curlew within six miles of us.”

Then to his unspeakable satisfaction, the great black-headed creature with the big brass-rimmed spectacles came on deck again, and assumed charge of the tiller, calling Tim along to help at the same moment. It was evident they were approaching the dreaded Narrows. Now and again in the deep clear water some sudden flashes of golden brown were seen—the long arms of the sea-weed. Far ahead there were some strange-looking swirls, silver curlings on the glassy blue, though no rocks were visible. Moreover, as they drew nearer and nearer to this narrow channel, it was very apparent that the tide was flowing seaward like a mill-race.

“We should have started an hour before,” said Miss Chetwynd, looking rather apprehensively at the swirling water.

“At all events we can’t turn and face that tide now,” her companion observed.

The Ghoul was paying heed, not to them, but to the course of the water and the lay of the shore. Then he shouted.

“Hard over, Tim!”

Fitzgerald lent a hand too, and the iron tiller was jammed over. Of course he looked to see the yacht swing round. She did nothing of the kind. The current was too much for her steering-way. There was a slight scratch—a sort of grating sensation—only for the briefest possible point of time.

Fitzgerald looked at Miss Chetwynd—with a natural sort of inquiry; for she knew more about this performance than he did. He found she was regarding him and waiting.

They had not long to wait. In fact, the whole thing had happened before they had had time to think. Immediately following that grating scratch along the keel there was a distinct and solid bump that shook the yacht from stem to stern; the Ghoul sprang forward to shut off the steam; there was the slightest tilting over of the boat; and then, after all this excitement and noise, the strangest imaginable silence. Everybody stood still, doing nothing. The Ghoul looked away astern in a reproachful kind of way. Then Fitzgerald began to wonder whether she was aground on rock, or on shingle, or on mud, and whether she would remain upright. And then various examinations and surmises and suggestions resolved themselves to this—that they were stuck here for five hours at least, with the compensation that the summer day was beautiful, and around them a perfect and delicious quiet.

“You know, Miss Chetwynd,” Fitzgerald said at length, “Tim and I might manage to get you ashore in the boat. We should be whirled along a good bit, but that would only give you another quarter of a mile to walk back to the house.”

“Would you have me desert the ship?” she said. “What might become of Sheil if he were left alone? You could never pull the boat back to the yacht again against that current. Besides, when the tide rises high enough to float the yacht again who knows what will happen?”

“But five hours—” said he.

“Mr. Fitzgerald,” said she, somewhat diffidently, “I—I have something to tell you that—that won’t take up five hours, perhaps, but that will give you plenty to think over for that time.”

"Not too serious?" he said.

"Oh no. Not at all. I hope not," she said.

So they had to set to work to make themselves comfortable during this enforced detention. Fortunately the *Black Swan*, when she ran into the bed of shingle and seaweed, fixed herself without much of a list; and the deck stools were quite serviceable. Sheil Glanny had gone below to bank up his fires and let off some of the steam; and Tim had accompanied him. These two, then, were practically alone in this shining, silent world of sky and sea, with the slow-sailing white clouds mirrored in the blue expanse of water, and the slight hissing all around them of the currents swirling between the rocks.

Mary Chetwynd's manner, as has already been said, was, in ordinary circumstances, marked by a perfect ease and self-possession; she never seemed to have to think twice about what she was going to say; she always appeared to be on the most simple and friendly terms both with herself and with everybody around her. Now, however, it was clear that she was embarrassed. She remained silent for a time; her eyes were fixed on the deck; once or twice she opened and shut her sunshade aimlessly. And when she did speak she jumbled nearly all the thing she had to say together in a very incoherent way.

"Mr. Fitzgerald—I—I don't think you and I have been quite fair to each other. I—I have been reading those papers in the *Daily Mirror*—I did not know you thought about such things—and then I am afraid you have not been quite happy here—and auntie wants to give you the place—and hopes you will stay here—and I want you to go away."

Her fingers were trembling.

"It is so difficult to make explanations," she said. "But I feel that it was inconsiderate of me to ask you to come here—"

What could make her so timid and almost distressed?—she who ordinarily did not seem to know what nervousness meant.

"I hope you won't think of it," he said, hastily coming to her rescue, and with an embarrassment about equal to her own. "Yesterday you seemed concerned about it also. Please don't think of it for a moment. I assure you it is a very good thing for people to be alone sometimes; it makes them find out something about themselves. Surely it is not

a trumpety matter like that that you want to speak about for five hours, Miss Chetwynd? I assure you I have enjoyed the time tremendously since I was here—I don't expect ever to have such a holiday again as long as I live. But who told you I wrote those papers in the *Mirror*?"

"Who told me?" she said, with her face brightening, for now the awkwardness of beginning was over, and here was a solid, practical subject that involved no danger. "They did. Every line—though I don't think you ever wrote quite in that way before. Auntie herself would have led me to suspect, for she thought they were like what our poor Frank might have written, just as she thought about the other papers in the *Household Magazine*. So there must be some similarity; but yet I see a great difference——"

Here she flushed slightly, and immediately said:—

"I wonder, now, if you know here what an impression they have made on the public? I suppose not. Do you know that every one is talking about them, as something quite new in literature. And the weekly papers have been saying the nicest things about them, especially the *Liberal Review*.

"No, not the *Liberal Review*?" said he quickly.

"Oh yes, indeed. Again and again. When you go back to London you will find yourself quite famous."

That topic ought not to have been distasteful to a young author, but he merely said:—

"I have had some letters about them. And invitations to contribute elsewhere. One publisher, indeed, wants to reprint them. If that were done, and if the public care to read them in that form, I might be able, after all, to gain some little footing in literature—enough for a beginner. I *had* begun to despair. I was at it a long time, and of course one does not like to confess one's self a failure; and I should like to have a definite way of earning a living, besides. But don't bother about my affairs, Miss Chetwynd."

"I must," she said, brightly, for she was glad the ice was broken. "I have been intrusted by auntie with the duty of telling you that she is more bent than ever on asking you to take over Boat of Garry——"

"I remember. It is very kind of her, I am sure," he said: "but in my circumstances it would be worse than useless."

"Yes; so she understands," said his companion, calmly.

“ You mean that you could not afford to keep up the place. Every one must see that. But what auntie says is that when she presents a picture to any one she presents it framed ; and of course she would see that you had enough to keep up Boat of Garry properly. More than that—and this is where my interest comes in—you would have quite enough to have rooms in London besides, and you might spend as much of the year there as you wished ; in fact, you would have your entire time at your disposal.”

He was regarding her with astonishment, almost with incredulity.

“ I do believe,” she said, with a slight, humorous smile, “ that you think I am going to ask you for a subscription to my charities.”

“ No,” said he ; “ I was wondering why your aunt should be so kind to me. This is overwhelming——”

“ Oh, do you wish to know why poor old auntie is kind ? You had better leave that to the philosophers. It is a way she has. And in this instance I don't oppose her. I hope auntie will live many years yet : and I don't see the fun of keeping up Boat of Garry for the benefit of Mr. McGee. Now, Mr. Fitzgerald, as auntie doesn't talk any longer of asking you to give up your name as a condition, I have no doubt you will become the owner of Boat of Garry, and you will be your own master, and have all your time at your disposal. Very likely auntie may expect you to spend most of the year here. I hope you will not. You will be in a position to be of very great use in the world. Of what use would you be here ? It would be all very well to use Boat of Garry as a place of recuperation, after work done ; but it would be selfish—at least so it seems to me—if you were merely to settle down here to enjoy yourself, even in the most innocent way, with those delightful rambles that you describe. Mr. Fitzgerald,” she said, after a second, “ I don't think you have been fair to me. You have met me among some scientific people, and you think I care for nothing but science. You think I am heartless. Well, let that be as it may ; it is of no consequence ; but at all events I think this : that those who are well off, and in a position where they enjoy the comforts of life in peace and security, should remember how these things were made possible to them—simply through the best people, century after century, doing their best—and they ought to have some gratitude, and be willing to lend a hand at the same work, for

the benefit of those who are in less favored circumstances. I don't like to talk about what some of us are trying to do among the poor in the east end of London; for it isn't very picturesque, and it does not appeal much to sentiment; and then it is so easy to impute motives. Well, I don't care much what the motive is, if the result is the same. Very likely doing charitable actions is only another form of self-gratification; and I suppose I consider myself a superior person; but let us take the case of a sick woman who can't stir from her bed to look after the poor room and kitchen, and she is afraid her husband, when he comes home at seven, will be discontented, and go away to the public-house, and suppose you take one of your district nurses to the place, and say to her, 'Well, never mind about the physic; she can help herself to that if the bottle is marked; but you look round in the evening, between six and seven, and give the place a bit of smartening up, and have hot water for the husband's tea against his coming home and stir the fire, and have one or two illustrated papers about'—well, perhaps, to see the look of gratitude on the sick woman's face is only to flatter your self-love: I don't say it is not; but ask the poor woman what is her opinion—whether she would have that done for her, or have the house left to its discomfort and squalor, and her husband turn out and leave her alone."

"I don't think," said he, slowly, "that I should be quick to impute motives, if you would tell me what it is you are doing there."

"Oh, but when I find a sympathetic listener," she said, with a laugh, "I am dreadful. I know so many stories that are interesting to me because I know the people: but they can not be so interesting to others——"

"You see, Miss Chetwynd," he continued, "short of a miraculous rising of the tide, we are stuck fast here for four hours and a half——"

"And you would have four hours and a half description of our lectures and entertainments, our Sunday services, and district nurses, and open-air spaces, and our window flower boxes, and all that? Oh no. Some other day, perhaps. At this moment, Mr. Fitzgerald, it has occurred to me that you might ask whether there is anything that might serve for lunch on board this shipwrecked boat."

"I believe there is a tin of biscuits," said he.

"That will do excellently."

“ Shall I bring them now ? ”

“ If you please.”

“ Accordingly he went down into the little cabin, and handed up, not only the biscuits, but also two bottles of soda-water and two clean tumblers; so that they had a most wholesome, if somewhat simple, banquet on deck on this fair warm summer day. And insensibly she began to tell him something of her own troubles; for it appeared that those charitable people were not all of one mind; and, besides certain schemes and organizations of her own planning, it turned out that she belonged to one or two societies of kindred intent.

“ And I do so want somebody to back me up,” she said. “ You must know I am a dreadful heretic and innovator, Mr. Fitzgerald—I am the champion of beer.”

“ Oh, indeed,” said he.

“ You know, it is easy enough to get on with the boys' entertainments; all they want as a bribe is a biscuit or two, with some apples, or nuts if it is not apple time. And then we are doing good service to the country by reading them patriotic poetry or stories of bravery at sea, and showing them a bit of practical science by means of a magic lantern, or even hinting that a boy should be too proud to steal, and not refrain simply from fear of the police station. But the men; what I say is, how can you expect the Stepney workmen, or the coster-monger from Shadwell, or the tired laborer from the docks, to come and sit out a lecture on ventilation or some such thing, with nothing to make him comfortable but a cup of tea, which gets cold directly, and with his pipe in his pocket? I say it is asking too much. I say it is not common-sense. What harm is there in letting each man have his pint of light ale—I am afraid they would not take to the Bavarian beer, though that would be the safest—and his pipe? I did not like it at first; but now I can stand a hall full of men smoking pipes. One must not be too particular. I was amused not long ago at the bravery of Lady——, who came down to see how we were getting along. She came to a boys' entertainment, in a very low neighborhood—to tell you the truth, Mr. Fitzgerald, I suspect about one third of them were thieves; but all the same she stood at the door as they went out, and shook hands with each of them, and complimented them on their good behavior. And the next night I had got them together I thought I would tell them

that Lady — was a great friend of the Queen's ; and one small chap said, immediately, ' Please, Miss, did the lady ever shake hands with the Queen ? ' You can see what the poor little fellow meant—that he had shaken hands with some one who had shaken hands with the Queen. But there again, that shows the imprudence of allowing strangers to come among us out of mere curiosity, for they would call that snobbishness——”

“ What does it matter what they call it ? ” said Fitzgerald, with some warmth.

“ I thought it was very pretty of Lady — to shake hands with each of the boys ; and I take no shame to myself that I told them she was a friend of the Queen's. It is very easy to criticise when you don't have to face the actual circumstances. I know it took me some time before I could bear the tobacco smoke. I tried a mean way of getting out of it by presenting them with good tobacco ; but that was no use ; they would not smoke mine : I suppose it was too delicate. Oh, did you hear what Mr. Scobell did just before we left London ? ”

“ No, I think not.”

“ He sent me another three hundred filters !—just think of it ! So there will have to be another big lecture and a distribution as soon as we get back.”

Apparently this young lady with the clear eyes and the bright smile had found a sufficiently sympathetic listener, for the time passed quite unobserved as she described all this work that was going on. They did not even notice that the tide was now flowing in ; that one or two shallow banks, where the heavy sea-tangle had lain exposed in the sun, were now covered by the sea again ; and that the Ghoul was watchful and anxious.

All at once the *Black Swan* was found to be moving ; but it was only a list from one side to the other ; that was so sharp, however, that it very nearly threw everybody into the water. And then as the tide rose she gradually righted ; Sheil Glanny, finding she was deep enough astern, ventured upon backing her off ; there was just enough room to turn ; and the next minute the *Black Swan* was sailing right up the creek again, while a shrill scream or two from the steam-whistle would tell the Boat of Garry people of her return. And then the throbbing and puffing and churning came to a sudden end ; in renewed quiet the little yacht cut its way through the glassy water ; with the boat-hook Tim dexterously made

a grab at the moorings; and presently the two voyagers were on their way to the shore.

"There, now, Mr. Fitzgerald," she said, as they walked along the road together to the house, "have I been the whole day talking to you about heaps of things that you can not take any interest in, and all that I meant to say to you I have forgotten. Except this—please don't stay at Boat of Garry when it becomes yours—at least, not always. I am very, very sorry I asked you to come here: I would not have done so if I had thought you were going to write about it like that. I am very, very sorry—"

She was speaking in rather a low voice, with her eyes downcast.

"But why?" said he, good-naturedly. "Any place is solitary when one is alone; and this place is most beautiful—that is all the difference. But do you really think," he added, more thoughtfully, "that these papers have made an impression on the public?"

"Most certainly," said he, with her face brightening. "Who could doubt it? Or is there any wonder that people should be grateful for having it pointed out that the common things of the world are far more beautiful than they had fancied? Does it not make life a little richer?"

"But I had nothing to do with that," said he, absently; "I was only repeating John Ross—my artist friend, you remember, Miss Chetwynd: I was only pointing out what he had shown me. No; why I asked was with the fancy that perhaps now I could earn something in literature. Perhaps there might be a prospect for me now; indeed, I think so myself, from one or two offers that I have received. Pray forgive me, Miss Chetwynd," he added, suddenly recollecting himself, "for talking about my affairs to you; but indeed I might say that you yourself are concerned—"

"I?" she said, with something like a start.

"In a measure," he continued. "I should like to go back to London soon, I think—"

"Oh I am glad of that!" she exclaimed, with very obvious eagerness.

"And if matters go well," he said—"you know you hinted about a contribution to all these varied charities of yours I say, if matters go well, you will perhaps allow me to give you a contribution."

She laughed lightly. She did not think it was probable he was so soon to become rich.

"What will your contribution be?" she said, idly, as he opened the big iron gate for her.

"Well," said he, "if your aunt would consent——"

"My aunt! What has she to do with it?"

"Oh, a great deal," he continued, as they walked along the gravel-path up to the house. "I was thinking, if she had no objection, my contribution ought to be——"

"Not two hundred pounds a year?" she suggested, rather jokingly.

"No," he answered, looking round at the beautiful place. "I was thinking that my contribution ought to be—Boat of Garry."

CHAPTER XXIX.

PLANS AND DREAMS.

"Now, auntie dear," said Mary Chetwynd, as she put her hat on the hall table, and smoothed her hair, and went into the room, "I know you are going to scold me."

"Indeed I am," said the old lady, with some astonishment and indignation. "Where have you been? To Limerick? To Queenstown? Scold you, indeed!—no wonder!"

"Oh, but I don't mean about that," her niece said. "That was unavoidable. We have been close by all the time—stuck fast. I dare say you were afraid of the bull, and came straight home; but if you had only climbed up the hill high enough, you might have had the pleasure of contemplating us for the last five hours. Only another little adventure: one gets used to them on board the *Black Swan*."

"How provoking, now!" Mrs. Chetwynd exclaimed. "The very first time that Mr. Fitzgerald goes to try the yacht! Of course he will think she is always getting into trouble——"

"Isn't she, auntie dear?"

"What was Sheil Glanny about?" said the old lady, angrily.

"Now, auntie, you need not quarrel with Shiel Glanny.

The real cause of the accident was yourself. You kept pretending you wished to go, just to assure Mr. Fitzgerald that nothing could be more delightful than a trip in the *Coalscuttle*; and so we were late in starting, and at the Narrows the current came after Shiel Glanny as if it wanted to swallow him; and then we found ourselves quietly shelved. Now, auntie, tell me, as I have been talking to Mr. Fitzgerald for these five mortal hours, haven't I done my best to make up for the silence he must have endured here? And what will he think about women's tongues after that?"

"I have not the least doubt," said the old lady, peevishly, "that you were all the time trying to make him discontented with Boat of Garry."

"No, not quite so bad as that," said the young lady. She was seated with her back to the window, and the afternoon sun touched the outline of the prettily shaped head, leaving the face in shadow. "But still bad enough to merit a scolding. I am quite prepared for it. For indeed, auntie, Mr. Fitzgerald seemed quite surprised when I told him what a stir these writings of his had made; and naturally he wishes to get back to London, which is the proper place for a literary man; and no doubt he is ambitious——"

"Yes, and no doubt," said her aunt, "you encouraged him in thinking of leaving Boat of Garry, the very place where he found just such things as he could write about, and you urged him to go to London, where he will have no specialty at all."

"Auntie," said Mary Chetwynd, "a man who can write like that, can write about anything; it is not a question of place or opportunity. Why, you know," she continued, "that all that description of the sea, or of the night-time, or salmon-fishing, or any occupation of the moment, is only an excuse. Surely you can feel that there is something that is behind all that—something that gets hold of people though they can scarcely tell how. I will undertake to say he could make a description of daybreak in Whitechapel as mysterious and wonderful and interesting as a description of daybreak at Killarney. Do you think he is going to lose his eyes because he goes to London?"

Miss Chetwynd glanced outside to make sure there was no one there.

"What the secret of it is I don't know," she said, "only he seems to give you the sensation that all the inanimate

things in the world are alive, and watching you, and patiently sympathetic. Don't you remember, auntie, Mrs. Sims's solemn vow that never again would she put on her table flowers that had been forced white in cellars? I told that to Mr. Fitzgerald to-day, and he laughed and said it was nonsense; but I thought it was a very pretty compliment. I want to show him what we are doing in the East End; I think he would understand quick enough, and not misjudge us. Mind, I will confess this; for a long time I thought he was merely a sentimental sort of person, like——”

“Like me: go on,” said the old lady, with a gracious smile.

“No, not like you at all, but like the people who are delighted to read pathetic stories of the poor, and who admire kindness in the abstract, but who wouldn't forfeit their own dinner to keep a whole household from starvation, and who would shudder with horror if they were asked to put a sponge to a child's dirty face. Well, we all make mistakes, I suppose. Those papers showed me I was mistaken about him, anyway. There is something deeper than sentiment in his nature. And—and——” continued the young lady, with a certain embarrassment, for she seemed to become conscious that she had been talking very frankly “and I am glad he is going away from here—if only for a time; for I was uneasy about my share in his coming; and if he were once away, don't you see, dear auntie, he could decide about coming back or not just as he pleased, and that would be his own doing. Now I am ready to be scolded.”

“For what, then?”

“Oh, perhaps I have not come to the worst,” said the penitent. “You know you said I might tell him of your kind intentions, auntie; and he was very grateful—no wonder; and even astonished, for he asked why you should be so kind, whereupon I referred him to the philosophers who can explain why the sky is blue. But did I tell you how interested he seemed when I told him all that is going on down there in the East End? Did I? Very well; when he began to talk about his literary prospects, and of the chance of his gaining an independent position that way, what do you think he proposed?—to give me a contribution!”

"After five hours' talking, what less could he do? I think you deserved it."

"But his contribution, auntie dear—always with your consent, mind—he said he should like to be Boat of Garry."

"I don't understand you."

"He meant that—that, if you didn't mind, auntie—he would give us Boat of Garry, or what it might fetch, rather."

"He shall not; he shall not," said the old lady, with decision. "You may play ducks and drakes with your own money, Mary; but no one shall go and throw away my poor Frank's place on Shadwell or Stepney. I won't hear of it."

"But if you say not, then not it must be," remarked the young lady, good-naturedly. "Of course he could not do such a thing without your consent."

"I shall not allow it. Why, the idea! Is that all he cares for the place?"

But here Miss Chetwynd grew alarmed. She knew not what mischief she might not have done.

"Auntie, dear," she said, with some eagerness, "there is no use to say another word about it. It was only a suggestion. I think he deserves credit for entertaining such a generous fancy, if only for a moment. Would you find many young men—fond of riding and shooting and all that—willing to part with such a place? And the idea that he does not appreciate it, or recognize its beauties! But I am sure, auntie dear, you would not be the one to stand in the way of a young man making a great reputation for himself? And that is why I think he ought to go away—at least for a time—and establish himself in London. Give him Boat of Garry, by all means, auntie, and the frame of the picture too; but you would not make the conditions too rigorous; you could not expect him to remain here always; no doubt he would be glad enough to come here from time to time—the winter shooting he says is excellent."

"Mary Chetwynd," said her aunt, with a severity that was in great part assumed, "you are trying to throw me off the scent. I can see what you are after. You wish me to put Mr. Fitzgerald in the position of having independent means, with no occupation—"

"I? Was it you or I who proposed that!" said the young lady, with some warmth.

“Wait a moment : I see your scheme. You don't impose upon me, Miss. Here you have a young man who is quick, intelligent, of a generous disposition ; and of course when he has a fair allowance of money, and absolutely nothing to do, isn't he the very person—even supposing that he is not allowed to sell Boat of Garry—to be carried off and added to your Whitechapel gang? Oh, I see the whole thing clearly enough, though my eyes are not as good as they once were. Here you have a clever young man for your lectures, and Whitechapel swallows him up ; no one ever sees him again ; literature loses him, and Boat of Garry is left empty and useless. So that is why we go and run a valuable steam-yacht on to a rock ; and that is why we talk for five hours ; and no doubt Whitechapel looks rather a pretty sort of place—in a distant way—when you have a smooth blue sea and picturesque mountains round you?”

The young lady flushed slightly ; but she retained her accustomed good humor.

“You are quite mistaken, auntie,” said she ; but now she spoke in a lower tone, for Fitzgerald was standing on the lawn outside, putting the pieces of his rod together. “Mr. Fitzgerald has his own plans. He is not likely to be led by either you or me. If either it would be you, naturally ; for he is greatly indebted to you ; whereas he and I are practically strangers. And I know he is anxious to acquire a position in literature : and I should not wonder if, when this book of his comes to be published, it were to make him quite famous. No auntie,” she continued, in a lighter way, for Fitzgerald had started off, “I know what will happen. Your kindness will enable Mr. Fitzgerald to write just in the way that suits his own bent ; he will be under no anxiety except to do his best work ; and of course he will be grateful to you ; and you will be able to produce him at your dinner table as your own author. Think of that ! You will have him all to yourself ; you alone will know what he is working at ; a real, live, distinguished author constantly on the premises. For no doubt you will ask him to come and live in Hyde Park Gardens ; and then you can get a study for him by turning me and my nine inch telescope out of doors. Then his lordship, when he pleases, will come over here and shoot wild-duck ; and perhaps, auntie dear, you won't mind sending me a brace now and again to my lodgings in the Mile-end Road, where I

shall most likely be starving, after having sold my telescope and my last pair of boots."

"Go away and tell them to bring tea," said her aunt, sharply; and so this discussion came to an end.

Meanwhile the object of all this diverse speculation was making his way down through the meadows to the stream, his long rod swaying over his shoulder. There was a contented look on his face on this warm and pleasant afternoon. The neighborhood of Boat of Garry seemed much more cheerful since the arrival of these visitors. And yet he was not paying much attention to the things around him; rather he was amusing himself by drawing an imaginary picture of what his life would have been had he been content to accept Mrs. Chetwynd's munificent offer in its simplicity. He was thinking of himself as owner of Boat of Garry; living a quiet, solitary, resigned life; taking what care of the place he could, no matter into whose hands it was destined ultimately to fall; perhaps, through industrious stewardship, being able to save something to send to Miss Chetwynd's charities; and then from time to time, in this peaceful and uneventful existence, jotting down the impressions of these silent hours, and so maintaining a sort of relationship with the unknown friends over there in England whom he should never see. He looked ahead, and beheld himself as another person. A sensation of being middle-aged came over him. It was in that character, indeed, that he had written the "Occupations of a Recluse." There was a tone in them as of the thinking of one for whom the eager interests of life were over. He had arrived at the stage of contemplation; the phenomena of the earth around him were not of much importance, except in so far as they suggested strange fancies, or became the secret friends and confidants of his solitary walks by sea and shore.

He was amusing himself with this fancy of what his life might be. There was the possibility offered him. There was no need for him to hand over Boat of Garry to Miss Chetwynd's charities; more than that it was extremely doubtful whether Mrs. Chetwynd would allow him. Indeed, so busy was he with this dream of the future that when he sat down on a low boundary wall, and placed his rod beside him against the stones, and took out his fly-book, he kept mechanically turning over the leaves and straight-

ening here and there a bit of feather or fur, and did not hear the footsteps behind him.

It was the boy that helped Murtough in the stables; and he brought two letters. He glanced at the basket; but did not venture to ask his honor whether he had caught anything; then he reluctantly left.

These two letters made Fitzgerald's heart beat, and caused his imagination to be fired with far other dreams than that of spending an idle contemplative life out of the world. The first was from the publisher who had already proposed to issue the "Occupations" in a volume; and who now put his offer in definite terms; a considerable sum—a sum that Fitzgerald had not dreamed of—to be paid down, with a royalty on each copy after a certain number had been sold. If Mr. Fitzgerald agreed, would he proceed with the revision of the papers forthwith? And did he happen to know of some capable artist who, in his opinion, would be a fit person to illustrate the book?

"I think John Ross and I will have a little talk about this," he said to himself.

But it was the second letter that he read and re-read with far greater gratification. That was about money; this was a personal triumph. It ran as follows:

"SLOANE, STREET, *Wednesday*.

MY DEAR SIR,—You may remember that I had the pleasure of meeting you one evening at Mr. Hilton Clarke's, when Mr. Scobell, who has obligingly given me your address, was also present. I had heard a rumor to the effect that the papers, 'The Occupations of a Recluse,' were by a Mr. Fitzgerald; but I did not identify the name with yourself until I accidentally met Mr. Scobell, who put me right. It has since occurred to me that you might find greater freedom as to choice of subject in the columns of a weekly paper; although I must confess that Noel appears to have given you a very wide discretion. His boldness has been justified; the papers are well spoken of; they are unusual; they have the touch of a new hand. Of course I do not say leave the *Mirror* and come to the *Liberal Review*; I do not consider that fair journalism; but many of the writers on the daily papers also contribute to the weeklies; and I merely say that if you happen to have an occasional article you might find yourself, for example, with a subject which would be somewhat too subtle and

out of the way for the hurry of daily newspaper reading) that you chose to send to us, I should be glad to have it; and as we have two rates of payment for different kinds of matter, I should be happy to put you on the most-favored-nation scale.

Yours faithfully,

“G. GIFFORD.

“To William Fitzgerald, Esq.,

“Boat of Garry, by Bantry, Ireland.”

His first, quick, proud thought was that he would walk straight to the house and show this letter to Mary Chetwynd.

But why to her? She did not know the story. There was no one now who knew the story; and his triumph was useless.

He regarded these letters. There could be no doubt that they shadowed forth prospects that ought to have been alluring enough to a young man of literary tendencies and aspirations. Indeed, as he looked at them, and guessed at all they hinted at, that career seemed to him a more noble and useful one than hiding himself away from the world in this solitary place, and avoiding the cares and anxieties and victories of life altogether. And so he was to become an author at last—perhaps even one who might win in some small measure the affection of the great many-eyed, and many-hearted, and not ungrateful public? And to write for the *Liberal Review*—that seemed almost as great a wonder: not standing, as of old, at the foot of the little stair, and anxiously awaiting the fate of a timid essay about some one else's work; but allowed to mount into his own small pulpit, as it were, and deliver forth his own utterances, if haply one here or there cared to listen to a whisper from the hills or a murmur from the wide seas amid the jangle of political life. It seemed a wonderful thing. He could scarcely rest. He wanted to be away and begin at once. The great world was calling him from these still solitudes; the picture was opening out before him; to what possible goal might he not attain?

And then somehow—as a sudden sob breaks the silence of the night, and the hushed and hidden grief reveals itself and all the darkness is shuddering with the old and ceaseless pain—just as quickly and terribly flashed across his consciousness the words “Too late! too late!” The time for these brave dreams was over now. A man does not

strive but toward an end ; does not fight without hope of reward ; does not strike for a great future if it is for himself alone. "Too late ! too late !" And he had pretty well schooled himself by this time ; and knew when it was time to give up thinking ; and was as well aware as any one of the stupidity of idle regret. So he deliberately and calmly put in his pocket the letters, and chose with patient care the flies he wanted ; and went down among the tall weeds by the side of the river. It was a pleasant afternoon ; the water was in good condition ; he must not return to the house without a sea-trout for dinner.

For a long time he had exceeding bad luck. The stream abounded with small river-trout that would keep playing with the big sea-trout flies, occasionally suffering for their folly by finding themselves twitched into the air and then floundering on the grass. This necessitated his fixing the rod upright, and going and getting the diminutive beast off the hook, while there was every probability that in flopping about it had caught one of the other flies in the weeds. And then again he had to be careful about restoring the captive to its native element, for the flash and shoot of it might alarm some more noble fish. But he worked away, whipping industriously and mechanically, not thinking of anything in particular except as to how to get the flies lightly on the water, himself unseen, and how to recover them without catching up on the bank.

At last there was a sudden "flop" that well he knew the sound of ; but he struck too quickly or too sharply. Again and again he dexterously dropped the flies over the same bit of water, but there was no response : perhaps the fish had been touched, and had learned caution. He was beginning to think that he must return to the house empty-handed, when, lower down, there was another "flop," instantly followed by a sharp whir of the reel ; then again by a deliberate "sulk," during which time he rapidly got in his line again, keeping on all the strain he dared. He was now in an excellent position, for the fish had taken refuge in a narrow deep little pool beyond some gravelly shallows, and as it was at a bend in the river, he standing on the neck of land, could have fair command of the fish whichever way he went. However, he now knew pretty well how many and how various were the accidents possible on this little stream, where there was no chance for that fine, leisurely playing of the fish that can be indulged in

on an open loch with impunity; and so he kept on the full strain of his tackle, ready for whatever might happen.

He had very little trouble, however. The fish made one long rush up stream, but fortunately kept almost in mid-channel. Then it leaped out of the water twice, but without doing damage. Then it sulked again; but it was evidently growing weaker. Finally, after one or two slow, quiet sailings up and down, it allowed itself to be gently guided into the side, where a cautious and then quick sloop of the landing net speedily deposited it on the grass,—a beauty of a sea-trout of apparently about three pounds weight.

Well, he thought that was quite enough, seeing it was getting near dinner-time; and Mrs. Chetwynd could not bear unpunctuality; while of course he had to exchange his jacket and knickerbockers for a more suitable costume. So he popped the fish into the basket, and was striding home through the meadows that led up to the house, when he saw Miss Chetwynd coming to him through the trees. She had evidently been expecting him.

“Have you caught anything?” she said pleasantly.

“A fairish sea-trout,” he said, “about three pounds. I am afraid it won’t be in time for dinner.”

“It won’t,” she said. “It is near dinner-time now. Mr. Fitzgerald,” she added, “I wanted to say a word to you before going in. You hinted something about handing over Boat of Garry to me, to help these various things of mine. It was kind of you. But please don’t even mention such a project to auntie. She will not hear of it; when I spoke of it she was very nearly being angry in earnest; and that does not often happen. No; you must take Boat of Garry, and keep to her wishes; you will find them considerate and reasonable enough.

“But what kind of use could I put it to?” said he, rather bewildered at the moment.

They had reached the corner of the avenue, and the house was visible. She regarded him for a second.

“That is hardly for me to say,” she said, slowly. “But I think if you were to take Boat of Garry, as my aunt wishes to give it to you, you would be in a position in which you could do a great deal of good to many, many people.”

He could not stay to ask her to explain, even if she were willing to explain; for he had but little time in which to

get ready for dinner. During that brief operation, however, some odd fancies occurred to him. If certain things were now no longer possible to him in the world, might not others be? Was it so necessary to human happiness that life should be crowned by either love or ambition? Look at Mary Chetwynd, now. Her life seemed valuable enough to her because she could make it valuable to others; it was a beautiful life in its sweet serenity, its cheerfulness, its atmosphere of frankness and kindness and content. Her philosophy was perhaps not very profound; but at least it was practical: "We enjoy such things as we have through the best people having done their best: let us try and do the same; and make the lives of those who have been borne down in the struggle a little more tolerable." It was impossible to imagine a happier human being than she seemed to be; fitting accurately and easily into her surroundings; full of cares that were scarcely anxieties, satisfied with her place in the world; a dispenser of light. It seemed strange for this king's daughter to spend the best part of her life in Whitechapel; but perhaps she could not be just quite what she was if she did otherwise. At all events she had found out something. That perfect serenity of content could not be the fruit merely of nature and disposition; it must be the outcome of nature and disposition finding fitting work and occupation. And if a woman's instinct had found out a way of living which seemed to make the world around her (in the eyes of all beholders) more sweet and cheerful and wholesome, might it not be worth while inquiring what that was?

Now no sooner had they sat down to dinner than the old lady, with a trifle of enforced gayety to hide a certain nervousness, began to unfold to him her designs.

"Mary and I have been having a dreadful quarrel about you," she said.

"I am sorry for that," was his answer. "But it does not appear as if much harm had been done."

"You must know that Mary and I have been sketching out a career for you—only with a difference—and drawing out plans. Of course the time is very appropriate; for one might almost regard you as making a new start in life——"

"I?" said he, in great alarm. Had she guessed, then, of that mortal crisis through which he had come, when the

value seemed to go out of life altogether, and death to take its place as the more desirable thing?

"Yes: with all the people talking about the new writer. Of course you will be quite a different person when you return to London. Do you think when you become great and famous, that we shall expect you to come and read accounts of murders to a poor old blind woman?"

"Indeed, I am not likely to become great and famous," he said, honestly enough. "But I should like to earn my living by literature. And I think I might be able to do that; I have just had two letters that give me good hope. But do you think that is any reason why I should prove myself ungrateful for all your kindness? I may be able to earn my living at literature, as I say; and then I would not ask you for the salary you have been kind enough to give me—you might hand it over to Miss Chetwynd for her charities; but that need not prevent my coming to read to you each afternoon just as before, if you will allow me. For I know," he added, more lightly, "precisely what you like in the way of literature and news; and I would not hand you over to your niece again, who would make you believe that the magazines and newspapers contained nothing but reports of Sanitary commissions and things like that——"

"Now I call that too bad," said Mary Chetwynd. "I read to auntie for years, and never got 'Thank you; you read for a few months, and she gives you Boat of Garry! And then to have insult heaped upon me as well——'"

"But, Mr. Fitzgerald," interrupted Mrs. Chetwynd, with some little agitation, "you speak of handing over something to Mary's charities and Mary said you had made some suggestion. Now you must understand this—do not think I am unreasonable—but you must really understand that any proposal of that kind with regard to Boat of Garry is out of the question. I will give you the place. I will give you enough to keep it up, and a surplus for your own expenses. But either let or sold or mortgaged Boat of Garry shall not be."

"But, auntie dear," said Mary Chetwynd, in her soft, persuasive voice, "Mr. Fitzgerald understands that! I told him. It was only a chance suggestion of his—generous but impracticable. You need not worry yourself about it, more especially as you can easily put it out of the power of any one to sell the place. Only I would not

have you make any one a present with any doubt remaining in your mind. Mr. Fitzgerald won't sell Boat of Garry."

"If it were handed over to me like that," said he, simply enough, "surely I could not do less than consider I held in on trust. It should be done with entirely and merely as you wished."

"I would rather make it binding on your honor than leave it to the lawyers," said she in a calmer way. "what I should like would be to have the place kept exactly as it is, and to be well looked after, so that if you should at any time think of asking us to come and look at it, it would be really coming to the old place again, and seeing it just as it was when—when my poor boy was so proud of it. For why should you not be proud of it too? It is a pretty place—"

"Mrs. Chetwynd," said he, "you speak as if something were needed to make your splendid offer acceptable to me. I don't think you can understand what it is to a young fellow of my age to be made independent—for that is what it would come to; to have his place in the world made sure for him, and that place a most attractive one. I have been near starvation once or twice—and not so long ago. And now you offer me an assured income, and all kinds of luxuries, and yet you imagine that I don't quite appreciate your kindness, or might be so ungrateful as to do with the property something not according to your wishes. I don't think you need have much fear."

"I will trust to your honor, and not to the lawyers," she said. "I will make no conditions when the transference is drawn out. I won't ask you to take our name, as I had thought of doing; it will be enough if you do what I want with the place. And if the money is not enough, there will be more. But about the name: I will ask you to let me call you Willie when you come to see me in London—if you do not mind."

"Oh no; it is only another part of your kindness."

"It is a bargain, then?"

"If you wish it to be, Mrs. Chetwynd," he was saying, rather doubtfully, for he was wondering whether she would always approve of what she had done, and perhaps was thinking of asking her to take time to reflect. But he caught the look of Mary Chetwynd's face. There was a touch of surprise there—almost of reproach. She seemed to say, "Why do you hesitate? Is that the way to accept

such a gift?" So he only said, "If I only knew how to thank you!"

"Never mind that," said the old lady, good-naturedly. "It is a bargain, then? Shake hands on it!"

So he rose and went round, and they shook hands to seal the covenant, as it were; and then he kissed her hand in mute token of gratitude, and went back to his seat. The ceremony was a brief one; but after that she never expressed any anxiety as to what might become of Boat of Garry.

"And now about yourself—" She hesitated for a second, and flushed a little. Evidently she had tried to call him "Willie," and had failed. "Tell me what your plans are. Mary says you would like to go back to London."

"I was thinking I should like to get back for a short time; but it is of little consequence; I will remain here if you prefer it."

"Oh, but that won't do at all. I did not buy you into slavery like that. The landlord of Boat of Garry must do as he pleases. You shall go back to London to-morrow if you wish."

"I could not do that either," said he, with a smile. "For I was thinking, if you did not object, I would ask my artist friend John Ross to come over here and make some sketches. They talk of putting illustrations into the volume they are going to publish for me; and if Mr. Ross were to come to Boat of Garry—I mean if you didn't mind it—I could show him where to make his sketches, and I suppose they could transform them into woodcuts."

"Bless the boy!" the old lady said, with her pretty laugh. "Is he asking for permission to invite a man to come to his own house?"

"He is rather a wild sort of colt, and not easily led," Fitzgerald said, doubtfully.

"For my part," said Mary Chetwynd, who had not spoken for some time, "whoever goes back, I must, very soon."

"Mary, there is not a soul in London!" her auntie exclaimed.

"Is there not, auntie? I can assure you that my friends about the Mile-end Road don't go to Biarritz or Mentone—not as a rule."

"Why, now, I wanted Mr. Fitzgerald to go back with

us—after a little while—just to have everything put straight—”

“Oh, I don’t mind waiting here for a little while yet,” Mary Chetwynd said at once. “I think I have earned a little longer holiday; and as for you, auntie, as you are a good-for-nothing, it does not matter where you are.”

“And I thought we might make the homeward journey in part a driving excursion—going round by way of Killarney. Wouldn’t that be charming?”

“Killarney?” said Fitzgerald, with a quick catching of the breath. And he could only add: “Oh, do you think so?”

“Don’t you?” she said, regarding him with astonishment. “Have you, an Irishman, anything to say against Killarney?”

“Oh no,” he said, rather under his breath. And then he stammered: “No doubt Killarney is very pretty—oh, yes, pretty enough. But—but it is scarcely anything more, is it? Perhaps I am not just to it. But I don’t care about fresh-water lakes—the mysterious association of the sea is so wonderful a thing. Do—do you really think it would be worth while taking all the time to drive round by Killarney.”

“Then what do you say to Inisheen?”

She did not notice that the blood forsook his face for a second. But Mary Chetwynd noticed it, and said, quickly:—

“Auntie, I declare to you I am not going to waste my time in driving excursions. These are for idle people. And Dan and Wellington always get fidgety when they are put up in strange stables: do you mean to have our necks broken?”

“My dear, I wanted Mr. Fitzgerald to show us some of the wonderful places he has described——”

“But you can see them all around here,” said her niece. “There is far more of Boat of Garry than of Inisheen—if it is Inisheen—in the papers. And what we ought to do is to give all the time we can spare to Mr. Ross, so that we shall have Boat of Garry glorified and made as famous as the book is sure to be. So I, for one, vote against both Killarney and Inisheen; those on the other side may hold their right hands—their right hand—up.”

“Well, you always have your own way, Mary,” her aunt said, contentedly.

“And indeed, auntie, you have not yet asked Mr. Fitzgerald whether he would prefer to go with us or rather choose his own time. It isn't every one who cares to go travelling with women. Now what I consider would be the reasonable and sensible plan would be this——”

“Whatever agrees with your own wishes, Mary, is always the reasonable and sensible plan,” said her aunt, with a smile.

“Well, but listen. The opposition can hold up its right hand when the proper time comes. Mr. Fitzgerald ought to go back to London shortly to arrange about his literary affairs there. I must go back for there are too many of us away at this time of the year. Now we will assume that Mr. Fitzgerald will either be, or pretend to be, content to be burdened with us two women, and take our tickets and all the rest of it, and get grumbled at if we lose anything; and so what I say is, let us have a little longer holiday here, not bothering about any Killarney or Inisheen; then, let us all go back to London; then let Mr. Fitzgerald, when his affairs there are put in proper train, come back here, along with Mr. Ross, for the shooting. What a pity it would be to miss the shooting——”

“Well, you are right there, Mary,” said the old lady, eagerly; for was she not anxious that Fitzgerald should appreciate all the advantages of the place she had given him.

“And of what use are women in a house at such a time? After a hard day on the hill, the men always go to sleep after dinner. Then, according to my plan, there would be no hurry; and Mr. Ross could do his sketches at his own leisure, and do justice to the scenery; and we should all be very pleased to have such a nice souvenir of the place. For who knows what turn affairs may take, and who knows whether Mr. Fitzgerald may be inclined to ask us ever again to visit Boat of Garry? I was going to suggest that he might invite us for Christmas; but Christmas is too busy a time with me.”

“I was going to say, Mrs. Chetwynd,” said Fitzgerald, who had been sitting with his eyes fixed on the table—and he spoke rather slowly, and with a trifle of embarrassment—“that if you would prefer driving round by Killarney, I should be most happy to go that way with you; and to Inisheen also, if you wished.”

“Oh, I wash my hands of the whole affair,” the cheer-

ful old lady said. "I have nothing to do with it. She arranges everything. Settle it between you. I am nothing but a doll in her hands."

"But then you are such a pretty doll, auntie dear," her niece said, "and such a gentle and well-behaved doll, I have never the least trouble with you. Now come outside, before it gets too dark, and we will have coffee there. All the evening sounds are so soft and quiet just before the night comes on; and you will have a thick shawl wrapped round your head and shoulders, auntie; and we will wait for the new moon, and turn over all the silver in our pockets. Poor old Boat of Garry—it has gone away into the hands of strangers; but we will have one more quiet evening outside the porch, listening to the streams, until the moon comes up behind the acacia, and then it will be time to get indoors again."

It was a peaceful night—a night to be remembered. To one of them there it seemed as if some haven might be reached, after all—of content, and affection, and gratitude. The darkness gathered over hill and shore; the moon rose into the clear heavens behind the trembling acacia leaves; the stream murmured down there beyond the lawn; the air was soft from the sea. A gracious night. There was hardly any need for speaking; it was enough to sit and watch the moon slowly rise, and the faint light tell on the grass and the gravel. Then there was a stirring of leaves around, and the air felt colder. It was with something of a sigh that they got up, and took their things with them, and went indoors, leaving the slumbering world and the scarcely breathing sea to the silence and the stars.

When Fitzgerald went up to his room later on, after having bade them good-night, and also having made another sort of effort to let the old lady know that he was fully sensible of her great generosity toward him, he found a half-sheet of note-paper placed somewhat prominently on the dressing-table, and at the first glance he recognized the clear, pretty handwriting to be that of Mary Chetwynd. There was no message or explanation, only these words: "*I hereby promise to contribute twenty pounds a year to the fund for providing toys for hospital children.*"

Well, he sat down and contemplated these words, knowing very well what they meant. It was an invitation to him to give to those poor children some small portion of the bounties that had been heaped on him. And the more

he thought of it, the more he was convinced that it would be a very strange thing if his literary efforts could not produce a yearly sum as great as that, or even considerably greater. As for the monetary arrangements that Mrs. Chetwynd might be disposed to make, he knew nothing about them as yet; but he understood that practically he was to have an income that would render him independent. Surely, then, literature might enable him to do as much as this, or more? So he went and got a pen, and scored out the word "twenty," and inserted the word "fifty," adding his signature in full—*William Fitzgerald*. And then he enclosed this document in an envelope, which he addressed to Miss Chetwynd, thinking he would leave it on the breakfast table for her in the morning, without another word.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE BOOK.

WELL, in due course of time—that is to say, about the end of October—the original "Occupations of a Recluse," along with numerous additions, and with a series of illustrations taken from sepia drawings by John Ross, were given to the public in book form, and almost instantly commanded a very large sale indeed, and were widely talked of. The publishers happened to be masters of the art of doing a good thing well, and had spared neither trouble nor cost in getting these sepia drawings transformed into a set of admirable woodcuts, while many people who had read the "Occupations" in a fugitive way as they appeared in the *Daily Mirror* were glad to have them in this permanent form. Moreover, the reviewers received the book favorably, although one or two rather complainingly asked how they could be expected to classify this amorphous hotch-potch of philosophy, poetry, and snipe-shooting, as if there were any necessity that they should classify it at all; while the *Liberal Review* said that, although the writer of these papers was a contributor to their own columns (editors are but human, and cannot avoid these little touches), they did not see that was any reason why they should not praise

good work when they found it. And when the *Liberal Review* people set about praising a book, they do it.

In the circumstances it was not likely that Mr. Scobell should miss his opportunity, and forthwith he made his way down to the Fulham Road. Fitzgerald still occupied the long low-roofed room there, for the sake of auld lang syne but now there was a heavy *portiere* shutting off the bedroom end, and there were some comfortable chairs, and more cheerful-looking rugs, while over the fireplace stood two brilliant Chanak-Kalesi jugs that Miss Chetwynd had given him, and that were the sole ornament of the room. Mrs. Chetwynd, indeed, had begged of him to take some better rooms in one of the streets leading from Piccadilly, but he asked to be excused, for he had no mind to spend much money on himself. In fact, he was living pretty much in his old way; although, on one occasion, when both aunt and niece went down to his humble lodging to have afternoon tea, he went to the extravagance beforehand of purchasing a modern Japanese tea-set and a few pots of flowers. It was then that Miss Chetwynd said the room looked too bare, and promised him the two green and scarlet jugs.

"My dear f'lah," said Mr. Scobell, laying his hat and cane on the table, and taking off his yellow gloves, "let me congratulate you! You have done it at a bound—at a bound. It is the only book talked of at every dinner table you go to. By Jove, sir, when I told them last night at Lady Lampley's that I knew every inch of your career, I found everybody listening. And I knew it; I predicted it: I said so to Gifford. I said to him when I met him, 'Gifford, my dear f'lah, you don't know what people are talking about; you are in your own set. You keep among a literary set and don't know what society is talking about. Why don't you get Fitzgerald to write for you? Why should he write only for the *Mirror*—a tradesunion Methodistical Republican rag like that?' Not that I approve of the politics of the *Liberal Review* either; you can't expect me; but what I say is that the *Liberal Review* is a gentlemanly sort of paper, after all: you see it in good houses; when I go into my club I find it lying about."

All this while he was looking around.

"My dear f'lah, this won't do at all. When a penniless, supercilious good-for-nothing like that fellow Hilton Clarke sticks himself up in the Albany—"

"Poor chap, he is no longer in the Albany."

“—I say, why should you be living in a bunk like this? Damme, sir, you should have rooms in Curzon Street, and a private hansom, and a hack for the Park! I am told that Mrs. Chetwynd makes you a very handsome allowance.”

“She does. But, you know, literature is best cultivated on a little oatmeal. And I find enough to do with my spare cash in another way.”

“Oh, but, my dear f’lah,” said Mr. Scobell, with a lofty smile “you are throwing away your chances. You might go everywhere—you might go to the very best houses. I’ll tell you what now,—my wife shall send you a card for one of her At Homes; and you ought really to come, don’t you know; you’ll meet some of the very best people, I give you my word. What’s more, I want you, like a good f’lah, to give me a night for a little dinner at my club; it isn’t a big club it isn’t one of the big swell clubs, isn’t the Abercorn; but you’ll meet a very good class of men there, I can tell you. And I’ll ask old Gifford, if you like, and anybody else you like, and we’ll have a little bit of a celebration, don’t you know; for I tell you what it is, Fitzgerald, old f’lah, I feel as if I had had a finger in the pie, don’t you know, and—and damme if I’m not proud of it, and precious glad that you’ve made such a hit!”

There was really some frank good-nature mixed up with the man’s vanity. He took out his note-book.

“What night shall it be?” he said. “Let it be a Saturday, the 15th or the 22d, and we’ll have a house-dinner; and you’ll see if the Abercorn can’t give you as good a dinner and as good a glass of wine as any club in London.”

“Either night you like, then.”

“We’ll say the 22d, to give more time. What I say is, do a thing well. A man has no right to ask me to dine at his club, and give me the sort of dinner you’d get at a — common restaurant. When I ask a man to my club I want him to have the best that’s in the kitchen and the cellar; and I’m not above taking trouble about it. What I say is, do the thing well. There’s a lot of people, don’t you know, nowadays, who pretend to be above all that; being particular about good dinners and good wines and good cigars is beneath their high mightinesses’ notice; they pretend they prefer water to a claret that cost you a hundred shillings a dozen. Rubbish—all rubbish. What I say is, the good things of this life wouldn’t be there if they weren’t to be used; and I suppose Providence knows as much about

what's good for you as any of the scientific swells. There's a good deal of that sort of nonsense goes on at the Chetwynds'; but the Chetwynds are not in fault. Upon my soul, I don't think it's respectful to your hostess to nibble a bit of bread and a cutlet, and drink a glass of water, and call that your dinner; I don't think it's nice; I call it bad form, I do; if any fellow did that at my table, I'm hanged if he'd find himself there again. The 22d, seven forty-five, good."

This was the true object of his visit; and he clasped his note-book together again with a satisfied air. Then he took up his hat and gloves.

"You made a suggestion—you were kind enough—" said Fitzgerald, timidly. And then he frankly said, "I wish you would ask my friend Ross too, who made the sketches, you know."

"Delighted! My dear f'lah, a thousand thanks for the hint. Delighted!"

He took out his note-book again.

"Give me his address, and I will write to him at once. Delighted, I assure you. A deuced clever fellow that; the landscapes Mrs. Chetwynd has of his are excellent—I call them first-rate."

"But he lives just below," Fitzgerald said, looking at his watch. "And he will probably be at work now. Will you go down and see him?"

"By all means."

They went down the stairs, and knocked at the door of the studio, and were admitted apologizing for their intrusion.

"Not a bit," said John Ross, who had his pipe in his fingers. "Come in. I was painting the portrait of the collic there, and he's not a good sitter; he was continually falling asleep, and I got tired o'whistling the poor creature awake, and was having a glint at the newspaper."

Mr. Scobell looked strangely around at the big, hollow-sounding studio. And then, with much roundabout phraseology and compliment, he explained the object of his visit; Ross's reply being briefly,—

"Yes, I will."

But Mr. Scobell did not stop there. He began to make a round of the studio, and to offer remarks; while John Ross became a trifle peevish.

"Now I'll tell you what I'll do, Mr. Ross," said he, in

his grand manner. "I don't see that an artist who can paint like that should not be known. I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll ask Sydenham to come to this very dinner."

Mr. Sydenham was a very distinguished painter and Academician; the husband, indeed, of the lady whom Fitzgerald had on one occasion taken down to supper, and who had politely declined to be bribed by sandwiches.

"Sydenham's a good fellow, a deuced good fellow; and a word from him would do you no harm. Now that is a mistake of so many of you artists and authors, don't you know; you keep hidden away among yourselves, and you don't go about and get to know the people you ought to know. I dare say now, you never met an Academician in your life?"

"The Academy and I are not likely to become great friends," said Ross, dryly. "I am a heretic. I will not conform. I like to paint in my own fashion, and they let me; and they go their way, and I go mine, and there is no quarrel between us. Indeed, I am not sure but that they try to do me a favor when they put anything I send them near the roof—the effect of distance, ye see, may soften the things down a bit."

"But you don't mean to say, now," remarked Mr. Scobell, coming to a dead pause before a rough sketch that was propped up on the mantelpiece—a very rough sketch, indeed, of a farmyard, with one or two cattle and a heap of straw warm in sunlight, "that they would not give a good place to a picture like that? Now I call that uncommonly good. I have seen a good many pictures in my time. I have been to half the galleries in Europe—and precious sick of them I got sometimes, I can tell you. I don't profess to be a judge, but I know a good picture when I see it; and I say that calf is as well painted a calf as anybody could want. Rough," said he, waving his hand slightly, "a little rough. Wanting in finish, don't you know. But a first-rate sketch; what I call an uncommon good sketch. I should not mind having that hung up in my hall. But the gable of the house is a *leetle* tumbled-over, isn't it—I would suggest—"

He took the canvas down, and held it out at arm's-length, examining it critically.

"It is nothing—it is a daub," said John Ross, rather impatiently, and he got the canvas out of his hands and put it up again, with its face to the wall.

But Mr. Scobell resumed possession of it, and again held it out at arm's-length.

"No, no," he said, patronizingly; "it has merit. It is well balanced. I call the light and shade of that sketch very well balanced indeed. And I am not afraid to trust my own judgment. I never give an opinion without being ready to back it with money. My notion is that a man should buy pictures that please himself; why should he care what other people think? No, what I say is, that's a very good sketch; an uncommon good sketch it is; very well balanced light and shadow; and the long and the short of it is, Mr.—Mr. Ross, that I will buy it. I should not be at all ashamed to have that sketch hung up in my hall—"

But now the red-bearded artist became very angry, and got hold of the unlucky sketch, and sent it spinning to the end of the studio, where it unhappily hit the sleeping collie, that forthwith sprang up with a howl, and slunk into a further corner, with its tail between its legs.

"I would not have such a thing go out of the place," said he, briefly.

But he soon recovered his temper; and when at last Mr. Scobell, after much more encouraging and soothing advice and criticism, had left, all that John Ross said to his friend about the visitor was merely,—

"Man, he's a bletherer, that one."

They went to the dinner, however, at the Abercorn Club; and a very sumptuous affair it was. They had the Strangers' Dining-room to themselves, and it was brilliantly lit, and the table was magnificently decorated with flowers. Of the gentlemen present Fitzgerald only knew his host, his companion Ross, Mr. Gifford, and, by sight Mr. Sydenham; but he was introduced to the others by Mr. Scobell with a series of pompous little compliments, the ordeal not being the less severe that these portly middle-aged persons regarded him with such a silent, blank, lacklustre-eyed scrutiny that he was on the point of saying, "Upon my soul I don't bite." He wondered what manner of men these were; and the mystery was not rendered less inscrutable when, after they had sat down, Mr. Scobell remarked to him in an undertone,—

"There's four millions at this table."

According to Fitzgerald's way of counting, there were

only ten persons ; so he was more hopelessly in a fog than ever.

"Four millions, if there's a farthing," continued Mr. Scobell, in the same low tone. "And as you and your friend Ross and Sydenham and I have little enough, you may imagine what the other sir have amongst them. The man opposite me and his right-hand neighbor are Directors of the Bank of England."

Then Fitzgerald began to see. No wonder these gentlemen were grave if they had the responsibility of owning four millions of money weighing on them ; and there was a business-like seriousness in the way they attacked their dinner, not turning aside for frivolous pleasantries, but keeping a sharp eye on the successive dishes. In course of time, however, the severity of their demeanor abated ; the staccato remarks about the probability of another European war, which hitherto had represented their conversation, developed into a unanimous abuse of the foreign policy of the then French Government ; and then again one funny man at the end of the table would succeed in getting his next neighbor to laugh (when not too busy). John Ross and the great Academician appeared to have become friends at once, and were talking in an animated fashion ; Mr. Gifford was rather in an absent frame of mind ; while Scobell, at the head of the table, beamed and shone upon his guests in silence.

"Well, Fitzgerald," said Mr. Gifford at length, "since we last dined together one of the little group has rather dropped under."

"Do you know anything about him ? Do you know where he is ?" said his neighbor, knowing well whom he meant.

"In Paris. Not very well off, I fear. He married Lady Ipswich after the *decree nisi* was made absolute ; and I believe her friends made some small provision for her : but Clarke had always careless and expensive habits, and I am afraid he is a little given to borrowing. But they have a pretty house, I am told, just outside the Marble Arch."

"The *Arc de Triomphe*," his neighbor suggested.

"Well, yes : what did I say ? I hope his book will be successful ; but the subject has so little interest for the general public——"

"His book ? what book ?"

"It came to the office the day before yesterday, I think. *The Laws and Limitations of Art*, it is called."

"Oh, I wish you would let me review it!" Fitzgerald exclaimed, with an eagerness that made his companion regard him with a quick look.

"No," said Mr. Gifford, with an odd kind of smile; "we could not have one of our own reviewers abused in our own reviewing columns."

"Your columns?" said Fitzgerald, in bewilderment. "Does Hilton Clarke write for you?"

"Sometimes," was the answer. "The *Weekly Gazette* got tired of him long ago, and he appealed to me. There are one or two things he can do very well. I am sorry for the fellow. I hope his book will be successful, but I doubt it."

"Why won't you let me review it, then?" said Fitzgerald, who was on pretty familiar terms with the editor. "You had some squabble with him, hadn't you, about the *Household Magazine*?" said Mr. Gifford, with his piercing eyes regarding him. "I gathered from Scobell that he had treated you rather badly. Well, that is nothing new; but still—"

"Oh, if you mean that," Fitzgerald said, hastily, "you are quite mistaken. It is quite the other way. I meant to say everything I could for the book. He did owe me some money; but then, on the other hand, I owe him something. But for him I dare say I should at this moment be the sub-editor of the *Cork Chronicle*. I should like to praise the book."

"That is quite as bad a temper," said Mr. Gifford. "We will get some more impartial person—but some friendly person, I hope. And why should you want to write reviews? Scobell tells me you are now the owner of an estate in Ireland, and have a handsome income besides."

"I want to make all the money I can," Fitzgerald said, "for I know plenty of uses for it. And as for the Irish estate, I consider myself only the steward of it; though I get shooting and fishing for nothing, and also the most delightful quiet when there is a chance of running over. Ask your neighbor—oh, let me introduce you: Mr. Ross, Mr. Gifford—ask him—he is an artist—what he thinks of Boat of Garry."

Mr. Gifford thereupon turned to John Ross, and Fitz-

gerald was left unoccupied, whereupon Mr. Scobell, who had overheard some chance phrase, said,—

“I say, my dear f’lah, what did you mean by that dedication?* Upon my life I don’t know whether the dear old lady was more pleased by it or more indignant. She did not speak to you about it perhaps.

“Yes she did. She thanked me; that was all. What was there to be indignant about?”

“‘My dear Mr. Scobell,’ she said to me—you see, Fitzgerald, I have known the Chetwynds for many years; they have always been in our set—‘my dear Mr. Scobell,’ she said, ‘what does the lad mean by describing me as of Boat of Garry? Won’t he take it when I give it to him? He wanted to give it to Mary to squander away; and now he wants to saddle me with it. Can’t I get rid of it anyhow?’”

“Oh, but that is all right,” said Fitzgerald. “That is quite settled and understood. Mrs. Chetwynd and I understand the position perfectly; and so also does M—Miss Chetwynd.”

So the banquet went on; the talk becoming generally louder; with gushes of laughter here or there; and perhaps nothing occurred particularly deserving of mention except that one tall and portly gentleman, of a most severe and repellent countenance, who had been boring everybody to death about his travels in America, was heard to remark, in the most innocent manner, of a well-known statesman whom they were discussing: “Well, all I can say is that he is a man of very strange fancies—very strange fancies indeed. He took a most unaccountable dislike to myself. A most singular thing. Yes, and he showed it too—damme he showed it.” And also that Master Willie, by a base and unworthy subterfuge, obtained a triumph over his enemy of former days. For he began to talk to Mr. Gifford about familiar quotations; and in the most naive manner observed that few were better known than

“De par le Roi, défense à Dieu,
D’opérer miracle en ce lieu.”

* This was the dedication in question, prefixed to the little volume:

To my friend and benefactress,

MRS. ALGERNON CHETWYND,

of Hyde Park Gardens, and Boat of Garry, Ireland, this collection of idle papers is most respectfully dedicated.

The editor fell into the trap headlong.

"*De faire miracle—de faire miracle*, I think," said he, politely.

"*D'operer* I think it is," said Fitzgerald, graciously.

"Pardon me, I am sure you are wrong. It is a most familiar quotation. *De faire miracle, en ce lieu.*"

"I would not contradict you; for, as you say, the couplet is so well known."

"Oh, there is not a doubt of it—not a doubt of it. Every schoolboy knows it. *De faire miracle*, of course."

"My authority for *d'operer*," continued his foe, in an absent and indifferent kind of way, pretending to be very busy in examining the constituents of a mysterious-looking sweet, "is not very absolute. I found it in the notes of an old edition I have of Voltaire's *Pucelle*, along with a little history of St. Paris. The date of the edition is 1773, and the couplet is spoken of as being familiar. But perhaps it is a misquotation."

"Perhaps, perhaps," said Mr. Gifford; but he lightly changed the subject, and wanted Fitzgerald to tell him how the Game Laws affected the poorer tenantry in the south-west of Ireland. And Fitzgerald imparted to him what information he could on that subject, without recalling to him the fact that they had had a dispute about the same couplet in former days when they did not meet on quite such equal terms.

At last the bounteous feast came to an end; and there was much hand shaking on the steps of the Abercorn Club. As far as Fitzgerald was concerned, it very soon appeared that this big dinner might, if he chose, be regarded as only the beginning of a quite indefinite series of similar repasts, though perhaps of a more domestic kind, for the little book made its way in a remarkable manner; and probably there was something in its contents that made people curious about the personality of the author; and no doubt he might have figured at a great many afternoon teas, and dinner parties, and midnight receptions. But, as it turned out, he found his life far too full of occupation for anything of the kind. When he dined at all in the evening, he went to, or stayed for, Mrs. Chetwynd's *table d'hôte*; and it is more than probable that he would have earned the contempt of Mr. Scobell by his indifference to the good things of this world, or such of them as appeared on the dinner table. But it was a fine thing, this constant and busy occupation; this finding that,

both time and money were inadequate to the calls made upon him. The "old, hysterical mock disease" got in a manner jostled out of existence; there was no longer any room for it. That was all left behind now; except, alas! when the wonder-world of sleep was opened, and again he was walking with Kitty on the sunny Sunday mornings along the hawthorn lanes outside of Cork, or rowing her home in moonlight, she singing the while, past the silent quays of Inisheen.

CHAPTER XXXI.

IN THE EAST.

IT may easily be surmised in what direction Fitzgerald was now spending what time he could spare from his literary labors and what money he could save from his stewardship, as he considered it, of Boat of Garry. At first he accompanied Miss Chetwynd on one or two of her eastern expeditions with far more of curiosity and interest than of hope; for it seemed to him, as it probably would to any outsider, that to seek to alleviate the distress and misery of this vast population with any such means as were at their command was about as sanguine as to try to drain an Irish bog with a sponge. Moreover, it was not very picturesque—as she had forewarned him. Very rarely was the wretchedness tragic: it was merely mean and commonplace: existence in these foul-smelling lanes and desolate grimy squares seemed a lacklustre kind of thing; occasionally the people were suspicious rather than grateful, and always they misplaced their *h's*. But by and by, as time went on, and as he saw further into the mechanism of the various organizations, he could not help admiring the patient heroism of those voluntary missionaries who, not deterred by the vastness or the difficulties of the task, busily and cheerfully set to work to do what they could; and began to see the appreciable fruit of their labors, even if it were only a touch of light and color added here and there to those poor ignoble lives—a flower-box in a window-sill; a drinking fountain, perhaps; an exhibition of pictures; a bit of green thrown

open to the children, with a swing or two. Then the free libraries, with books, magazines, and newspapers; cool in summer, and well-warmed in the winter, with coffee at a penny a cup; and the lectures and readings and entertainments, now putting some inkling of sanitary requirements into the heads of the grown-up people, again teaching the boys and lads something of the qualities that built up England: and the invaluable district nurses, carrying notions of cleanliness and kindness into these poor homes; and so forth, and so forth; all this busy, silent, unobtrusive work, not appealing loudly for subscriptions, and not claiming for its authors any title to martyrdom, seemed to him a very noble thing. The sympathy led to practical help. At the outset he rather wished to act merely as assistant and safeguard to the niece of his benefactress; but he soon found there was no need for that. She had no fear, and there was nothing to fear. In another way, however, he was of use to her. Mary Chetwynd was very much at home in dealing with "her poor people," as she called them, directly; and she had an admirable self-possession on the platform, whether she was demonstrating to an assemblage of men and women the awful effects of drinking unfiltered London water, or reciting patriotic poems to an audience of Whitechapel youths; but at the council board of the society she was somewhat diffident. It very soon appeared, however, that when Mr. Fitzgerald was in course of time elected to this board, the new member held very strong opinions about the rights of minorities—especially when the minority was Mary Chetwynd. Arguments and grumbling were alike thrown away upon him. No, there he was; there he would stay. And at last, upon the burning question of beer, matters came to a final issue.

"Very well," said he, when he and Miss Chetwynd had been entirely outvoted, "we need not quarrel. You may go your way, but you can't hinder me from going mine. As I said, I don't think a glass of ale can do any harm—if not given to the boys; and I don't think it fair to ask these men to come and spend a long evening without giving them that small amount of indulgence. Now I mean to try it——"

There was a kind of murmur of protest at this. Was he going to ignore such a solemn thing as a vote?

"But you may have it either of two ways. Either I will resign altogether, and be free to act that way, or I will

remain a member of the society, making any entertainments: I get up my own affair—at my own expense, I mean—so that for them the society will not be responsible. That will take away the reproach of beer from you; it will be my doing alone.”

There was a little further grumbling; but the second alternative was eventually chosen. They did not wish to get rid of Fitzgerald altogether, for he was an active sort of fellow, and he had time and money at his disposal; and they had seen how well he got on with the men and boys at these meetings, keeping order in a good-humored, hectoring way. Besides, they had had one or two newspaper squabbles, and he had been found to be an efficient champion in that direction.

But when they got outside, Mary Chetwynd said to him, regarding him with eyes that seemed frightened and laughing at the same time.

“Oh, Mr. Fitzgerald, what have you done?”

“Nothing dreadful, I hope,” he said, with a smile.

“When you said ‘I,’ of course you meant ‘we’?”

“Well, then?”

“But how do you expect you and me to do all that by ourselves? Think of the expense. Auntie will be furious. She does not mind about me; but she says I am ruining you, and that you are getting no pleasure in life——”

“Didn’t I promise to go over to Boat of Garry in July? and you and she, I hope, will come over and stay there too.”

“And I have some remorse also,” she continued. “You would never have raised the beer question if I had not told you about it in Ireland. Then that little —— Theatre costs £8 10s. a night, without any beer. If I could pay for everything, I should not mind. Or if you would have a hack and ride every day in the Park, as Mr. Scobell suggests, then auntie would be more satisfied, and I should be sure you had some kind of—of——”

“But do I look so unhappy?” he asked, with a laugh. “However, your mention of Mr. Scobell is most opportune. I think I ought to plunder Mr. Scobell——”

“Oh no; after the filters——”

“But he has friends. At a dinner last year he told me six of them at the table were worth four million. Now if we could get Mr. Scobell to squeeze them a little, what

would it matter about the —— Theatre costing £8 10s. a night?"

"You know best," she said simply; and I hope we have not undertaken too much."

But indeed, whether he or she knew, or whether both were ignorant, what interested him in that work down there, and what was a constant delight to him, so that the various pursuits or pleasure on which he might have spent the very liberal income he enjoyed were not even to be thought of, was the mere spectacle of herself in her relations with these poor people. The beautiful, quiet serenity of her nature seemed to shine there, amid all that turmoil of want and care and ignorance and crime. Wherever she went, peace surrounded her. Sickly and ailing women, inclined to succumb altogether to the hard pressure of fate, drew strength from the self-reliant character of this mere girl, and struggled on anew. Many a one of them told Fitzgerald that none of the district nurses could bring such cheerfulness into a house as she could. He grew to think of her what they thought of her. He heard their stories of her; he saw her through their eyes—this king's daughter, with the outstretched hands, blessing and comforting wherever she went.

"Willie," said Mrs. Chetwynd to him one evening before the guests arrived for the *table d'hote*, "why did you not read me that article in the *Liberal Review* about benevolence—about the reaction of benevolence on one's self—what was it called?—'Benevolence as an Investment?'"

"I saw the article," said he, evasively.

"Yes, and you wrote it?"

"Why, how should you think that?" said he.

"Because Mrs. Sims was here this afternoon, and she read it to me, and both of us agreed that you had been describing our Mary."

"I—I hope you don't think there is anything that would annoy—that would be too personal—if Miss Chetwynd were to see it?" he stammered.

"Well," said the bright little old lady, "considering that you give her all the virtues of an angel, with half a dozen other womanly ones, I don't think she ought to object. And indeed, you know, although she is my niece, I must admit that the portrait is recognizable."

So the time passed; and Mary Chetwynd was very proud of the success of the new venture that Fitzgerald

had started (though whether that success was due to the merits of the lectures and the efficiency of her stage-manager and body-guard, or simply to beer, it would be unnecessary to discuss), and there was no great difficulty about funds, after all. Then Fitzgerald and Mrs. Chetwynd and her niece went over to Boat of Garry in the July of that year; and John Ross went with them, being commissioned to reproduce one or two of his sepia sketches in oils; and they had a pleasant stay there until the end of August. Altogether their life, either there or here in London, was an uneventful one, full of cheerful activities and kindlinesses; and there seemed no reason why any one should wish it changed.

But accidents happen. One evening, after they had come back, Miss Chetwynd had arranged to have her following of youths and lads assemble in the little theatre before referred to, to have displayed to them, by means of a series of magic-lantern projections on a large screen, some portraits of great Englishmen, with occasional remarks by herself. Ordinarily, on such occasions, Fitzgerald was there at the marshalling of the lads, ready with a good-natured cuff to preserve manners, if need be; but the truth was that as long as "the lady" was present they were very well behaved indeed. On this evening, however, there was some serious business elsewhere about a poor wretch who had purloined a book from one of the free libraries, to buy (as he said) a loaf of bread; and so Fitzgerald did not get along to the theatre, until the lecture or entertainment, or whatever it might be called, was well on its way. He slipped into a corner of the pit (there were neither stalls, gallery, nor boxes in this little theatre) and sat down.

The lecturess seemed very self-possessed and familiar with her audience, talking to them as she selected this or that slide, and occasionally coming to the foot-lights to address them directly.

"Now," she said, as she was stooping over the table to pick out the proper slide, "I suppose some of you read *Jones's Journal?*"

This was a wretched little local print, which did a good deal of mischief down there. Her audience, perhaps thinking that the portrait of the great Mr. Jones was about to appear on the screen, stamped their feet a bit. On that she rose erect, and faced them with some astonishment.

"Oh!" she said, "is that the kind of paper you ad-

mire? I hope not. I hope not, indeed! Perhaps some of you think that when Mr. Jones is denouncing the Government, and saying they have done this, that, and the other thing, he could do it better himself? Would you like to see him try? Is he likely to know more about governing a country—is he likely to be more honest—than men who have been educated all their lives for it, many of them very rich men, who, if they had chosen, might have spent all their time in amusing themselves with horse-races or yachts, but who, instead, go through an amount of labor and drudgery that the hardest-worked among you don't know anything about, only to find themselves called swindlers and pickpockets by gentlemen like Mr. Jones? Well, now, I know something that will enable you to judge of Mr. Jones. I know that he has been twice before the magistrate for drunkenness, and was fined each time; and I know there was an execution in his office not very long ago; and I put it to you whether a man who manages his own affairs like that would be likely to be able to manage the affairs of the country?"

This argument, though somewhat crude, and even verging upon libel, was, at all events, easily understood.

"No! no!" was the general response.

"Well, now, I am going to put before you the portrait of a great Conservative statesman, a most able and distinguished man. Perhaps I am not a Conservative myself; but that is neither here nor there; I want you to believe that the men who govern England on both sides in politics are trying to do their best; and that the man who tries to stir up people to lawlessness and discontent is doing his worst, and making nothing but mischief. Don't you believe that the rich have stolen the money they have; in most cases it has been brought together by their fathers and grandfathers being sober, industrious, and able men; and when these people try to make good laws you ought to be glad of it, instead of howling at them as if they were tyrants. It is the interest of everybody to preserve law and order. Why, if it was not for law and order, how could your mothers and sisters go along Whitechapel Road on a Saturday night, looking at the shops, and buying things for the Sunday dinner? It is the law that protects them from being pushed down and their money taken from them. And so far from regarding the police as your natural enemies, or the enemies of anybody, you ought to think of what Stepney

or Whitechapel would be without them, and you ought to be precious glad to lend them a helping hand when you see a thief bolting, or when you see a band of roughs coming along the pavement, hustling the women off and annoying peaceable people."

She put the selected slide into the magic lantern; the man in the "wings" lowered the gas of the footlights, and when the large, visionary, colored figure of this Conservative statesman appeared on the screen, it was greeted (despite all the tirades of *Jones's Journal*) with a murmur of approval. But just at this moment something else happened: One amongst the audience whose eyes had wandered away from the large circle of light on the screen had noticed a flickering of another sort of light along the edge of a portion of the curtain; and thoughtlessly he called out "Fire!" There was an instant of dead silence, every one looking all around; and then, as the red light up there attracted their eyes, there was a universal rush and clamor. Fitzgerald jumped to his feet and called to them to sit down; but he might as well have called to the sea. There were no shrieks or screams, for there were no women present; but a wild struggle to reach the doors, and a consequent wedging up of the excited crowd. They could not squeeze through. Then the black mass—or a great portion of it—seemed to turn; frightened faces looked here, there, everywhere; then the stage was charged. Fitzgerald caught the first one that made by him, and jammed him down on to the form.

"Sit down, you fool; there is no danger!"

But he might as well have tried to put his hands on a pack of wolves. They swarmed up and over on the stage; seeing which, Fitzgerald leaped up there too; shoved them aside, and made for the spot where Miss Chetwynd was standing, her face somewhat aghast. She was not regarding the flames overhead; she was looking at the rushing crowd that was now hurrying wildly toward the narrow passage leading from behind the stage. He caught her hand—or rather it was her wrist—and held it tight.

"Do not be afraid," said he, glancing up at the smouldering curtain, and then at the disappearing people. "There is no danger. They will all get out."

"I am not afraid, so long as you are by me," she said, in a rather proud kind of way.

He turned and looked at her eyes; and her eyes met his.

"For always, then?"

She did not speak; but she placed her hand over his hand that held her wrist; and so they remained, waiting for the wild surging mass to get free away, while the red light overhead grew more distinct.

It was a strange situation; but he seemed to have no fear. He remembered afterward that he was trying to calculate how many more seconds it would take for the last of the crowd to get through; also wondering when the firemen would arrive, and whether the theatre had been left altogether without attendants; and at the same time watching quite calmly the progress of the flames. They did not proceed rapidly. It was some little time before the woodwork caught fire anywhere; for at first it slowly blackened and frizzled, as it were; then a pale thin blue fire became visible here and there along its surface; then a quicker glow of crimson gleamed up.

"Shall we go now?" he said—for the loud cries for Dick and Harry and Jack and Bill had grown fainter and fainter.

"When you please," said she, with firm lips.

There was no trouble or danger about the matter. Just as they were leaving, a loud splash and hissing was heard overhead and a shower of heavy drops of water came over the stage. They made their way along the "wings" and out by the stage-door, and found a large crowd assembled in the street, kept back from the fire-engines by the police. In ten or twelve minutes the whole affair was over, and it only remained for Fitzgerald to get hold of the gas-man from among the crowd (the rascal had been among the first to bolt) to have the gas turned off, so that there should be no explosion; while, by the light of some candles, and with the aid of a few of the boys, he got the magic-lantern apparatus collected and carried to a four-wheeled cab outside, in which Mary Chetwynd was awaiting him.

When at last they had driven away from the dense crowd that still lingered about the place there was a better chance for speaking; but silence seemed to be enough. At length she said:—

"You once offered me Boat of Garry. And now you give your life to me. What next?"

"It will become worth something when you take it," he answered.

CHAPTER XXXII.

IN A GALLERY.

AND now we must let a few years go by, and come to a certain private view day at the Hanover Gallery, Hanover Square. This gallery, which was intended to be an adjunct rather than a rival to the Royal Academy, had been opened for the first time the year before, and had provoked a good deal of animadversion, favorable and otherwise. For while some declared (with more insistence than was at all necessary) that its chief characteristic was an affected imitation of the manner of the early Florentines, but with the beauty and light and gladness of the old painters replaced by a sickly languor and distortion and decay; that the decorative character of the classical designs in nowise served as a cloak for obvious ignorance of anatomy and consequent bad drawing of the human form; and that the landscapes were less remarkable for a reverential study of nature than for an impertinent audacity, there were others who maintained (with a touch of personal injury in the tone of their remonstrances) that this Hanover Gallery collection was a welcome relief from the inanity of the common run of exhibitions: that at all events it drove people to think; that a seeking after the highest in art, with whatever shortcomings, was better than the complacency of mediocrity; that, in short, anything was desirable that could help to get rid of the simpering curate sort of stuff that had for so long told its commonplace and silly little stories on the walls of British galleries. It needs only be added here that among the most vehement of the admirers of this new institution was John Ross. Whether dissatisfaction with the Royal Academy's continued neglect of him may have had anything to do with this feeling it is unnecessary to inquire, for human motives are mixed things; but at all events his championship of the new gallery was so uncompromising that Mrs. Chetwynd, who was always on the lookout to do little kindnesses in this way, contrived a meeting between Sir Cyril Smith, who was the director of the place, and the Scotch artist, which had, as it turned out, sufficiently important results for one of them.

So on this summer-like day in spring there was a large and fashionable assemblage circulating through the rooms, or congregated in groups here and there, chatting, or regarding their neighbors' costumes, which, among the young maidens at least, tended rather to sadness of hue and quaintness of design. But there was one group there of which a tall, bright-eyed young lady was a conspicuous member; and certainly her gown, if there was a suggestion of mediævalism about the shape of it, was not lacking in boldness and richness of color. It was a velvet gown, of the color of the very darkest sort of wall-flower—a deep ruddy purple; and it was trimmed with lace, or what appeared to be lace, of a dusky yellow—not the yellow of primroses, but rather of daffodils. It was more the costume of a young matron than of a girl; but, indeed, when you looked at this person, it was not her dress that first attracted notice, but the grace and self-possession of her bearing, and the bright, frank laugh of her eyes.

A tall, elderly, handsome man made his way through the crowd to her.

“My dear child,” said he, taking her hand, “I have been hunting for you everywhere. I was told you had come. And how well you are looking! And your dress, too—they say it is the prettiest in the room. Very pretty—very pretty!”

“But you need not praise me for it, Sir Cyril,” said she, “nor my dress-maker either. My husband chose the colors. Was not that obedient of me? I told him I dressed only to please him, and that he might as well choose what colors he liked best. Was not that sweet of me?”

“Ah!” said he, “young wives are always like that, at first—”

“Young wives, indeed! And my boy will be four years old next June!”

“And your boy will have very little to thank you for if you go catching another fever, and have to winter in Italy, leaving the poor little fellow at home. Where is your husband?”

“Oh, he's away with John Ross somewhere—fighting, no doubt. They're always fighting now—ever since we came back from Italy.”

“Have you been round the rooms yet?” he asked, glancing at the little group of friends from whom he had slightly separated her. She forthwith introduced him.

"No," she said. "It is a little too bewildering yet—to me at least. All one's friends seem to be here; and it is so difficult to remember all you want to say at the moment that one has no time for the pictures. It is more exciting than sitting on a terrace at Sorrento, or in a veranda at Capri, watching the tourists climbing up the steps on the donkeys. We went to Ischia after you left us. Now don't stop talking to me, Sir Cyril, for you have all your friends to receive—"

"And the whole day to do it in," said he, lightly. "No; but I am coming back to you. You must not go away anywhere for lunch. I will come for you at one. Mind you have got hold of your husband and Mr. Ross; there is something very nice and quiet prepared in a corner—an invalid's luncheon, you know. Now go and get a seat; don't stand about all day; but indeed I never saw you looking better in my life."

He was going away, when he suddenly turned.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed—"I was almost forgetting to ask how your aunt is—better, I hope?"

"Oh, I think so. I think she is almost quite better. But she likes perfect rest, and seems disinclined for the trouble of going out; she says she won't go with us to Boat of Garry this year."

"But she is not ailing now?"

"Oh no, scarcely at all; the warm weather suits her, and all she suffers from now, she says, is an incurable laziness."

"One o'clock, then, mind."

Almost immediately after Fitzgerald came hurrying along.

"Have you heard? Has any one told you?" he said, eagerly.

"I have heard nothing in particular," she said—"but why did you put on that shabby old shooting-coat?" Every one else has a frock-coat and gloves. Where are your gloves? This isn't Capri."

"Every one says that Ross's pictures are the feature of the exhibition," he said, in the same rapid way, not in the least minding her remarks about his clothes. "They have given them the place of honor at the head of the next room—all five in a row. Come along and see them. Gifford—" Here he turned to Mr. Gifford, who, with his wife, a tall and stately dame, was now examining some of

the pictures close by—"Gifford, come and see some pictures in the next room. I told you they would make their mark."

"Your friend Ross's, I suppose?"

"Yes. Come and judge for yourself. Mind you, I mean to praise them, friend or no friend; so if you are afraid of the reputation of the *Liberal Review*, you'll have to get somebody else. Or we will appeal to an impartial authority, if you like."

No doubt Mr. Gifford, as the little party together made their way up to the head of the next room, considered that he himself was quite sufficient of an impartial authority; and, as it turned out, he was much struck by the series of landscapes. Or, rather, there was only one landscape, treated under five different atmospheric conditions. The subject was the stretch of meadow, water, hill, and sky visible from the window of the dining-room at Boat of Garry; the first showing the calm, clear dawn arising in the east, the world being quite still and silent and lifeless; in the second was all the variety of a windy summer day—masses of white cloud and shadow, the trees blowing, the work in the fields going on, and over at the horizon an ominous rising of purple; then, in number three, a desolation of rain, everything gray and blurred and hopeless; number four showed the afternoon clearing up somewhat, with a golden mist beginning to tell as the sunlight got through the moisture; and finally, the peace of a clear moonlight night.

"A most excellent idea!" exclaimed Mr. Gifford, at once. "Why, that is how one becomes familiar with a place! Why has no one done that before? No one wants any more variety than that—indeed, it shows all the more what skill the artist has when he can do without fresh materials. My dear fellow, you may praise those as much as ever you like. They are the best things I have seen in the exhibition yet, except your wife's portrait. Praise them as you like; I sha'n't interfere with you."

"But, you know," Fitzgerald said, "there will be a scrimmage among the critics, just as there was last year. Now don't let the *Liberal Review* in for anything rash. I'll tell you what I'll do; suppose we appeal; suppose we take the opinion of a thoroughly skilled artist—"

"Not a bit. On that theory you would have me allow poets to review other poets' poems, and novel-writers to

review other people's novels, and so on. Would that be fair? We have set our faces against it since ever the *Liberal Review* was started."

"And yet it seems to me the only opinion worth having," Fitzgerald ventured to say, "if you can make sure it is without bias. Who can decide anything about any art who has not shown that he has mastered its technicalities? Surely the valuable opinion is that of a man who knows the art; who is himself a proficient; and who is so far above everybody else that jealousy or envy is out of the question—"

"And do you expect the *Liberal Review* to pay men like that?"

"Oh, I was not talking about writing at all," Fitzgerald said, with a laugh. "I was talking about these pictures. Now I would take the opinion of Sydenham before any other. He is far beyond rivalry; he can paint landscape just as well as portraits, and nobody can come near him in either."

"He is too good-natured; he finds good in everything," Mr. Gifford objected. "I have walked round the Academy with Sydenham. Not a word of objection anywhere; always the best points picked out; the difficulties explained to you; always praise, especially if the picture is by one of the younger men; always encouragement—very good-natured, but not criticism. No; I propose that if there is to be any appeal it will be to your wife, for she knows the place. Mrs. Fitzgerald, we want your opinion of Mr. Ross's landscapes."

"Oh, don't ask me," said the tall young lady in the wall-flower and daffodil gown; "I want to buy them, and can't afford it."

"Well, that is an honest criticism," Mr. Gifford said. "I think, Fitzgerald, you may let the *Liberal Review* speak well of the Boat of Garry studies. But where is Ross himself?"

"He won't come into this room. He says it is like having himself put into a frame, and people examining him with a microscope."

But now they had to set to work to go through the galleries systematically and seriously, though that was often interrupted by the arrival of a fresh batch of friends who were all of them anxious to see the portrait of Mary Chetwynd (as some of them still called her) which had been

painted by Mr. Sydenham, and which was supposed to be the chief ornament of one of the rooms. They were joined by Mr. Ross, moreover, whose remarks, if somewhat disjointed and dogmatic, were generally to the point.

"That fellow?" he said, regarding the work of an artist who had obviously spent an enormous amount of care in constructing an allegory (but the conundrum was difficult of solution until you turned to the title in the catalogue). "That fellow? Look at the thrawn necks; look at the sham sentiment! That fellow? he would get painted tin flowers to put on his mother's grave. There," said he, turning to the full-length portrait of Fitzgerald's wife that hung in the middle of the room; "look at that now. That is painted by a man who knows that it is his business to paint, and no to bother his head with the twelfth century or the fifteenth century or any other. Long ago he shook off the corpse-cloths; you canna bind a giant in spider-webs. There's just nothing that man cannot paint: put it before him—a young lady's face, a bit of moorland, a collie dog—no matter what it is—put it before him, and then you find the master-hand getting it on to the canvas with a power and a carelessness that has grown out o' the anxiety and hard work of a lifetime—the details that tell *in*, the details that are of no use *out*. Look at that fan for color, now—the sharp line in the dusk of the dress. Look at the eyes: they're no saying "What do ye think of me? Am I looking my best? Am I standing right?" They're saying "Here I am. I am in the world as well as you. I could speak to you if I liked." People think he is careless; I say that he is careless about what is non-essential; but many a hard struggle it took him to find out *that*. Would they like him to labor the thing, so they could count the pins in the pin-cushion—"

"My dear Mrs. Fitzgerald," said a voice behind them, "I must really beg and entreat of you to come away."

They turned and found before them Mr. Sydenham himself, and also his pretty wife, whom Fitzgerald had in bygone days endeavored to bribe with sandwiches.

"Is it fair?" said he. "Is it the act of a Christian woman, to stand opposite my paint, and show people the difference? And you just back from Italy, too, with the Neapolitan sun on your cheeks!"

"I was listening to a lecture, Mr. Sydenham," said she. "Mr. Ross was delivering a lecture; and you would have been pleased if you had heard."

"Is it to be 'claw me, and I'll claw thee,' then?" said the famous Academician, with a good-natured smile. "There's nothing in these rooms to beat your fine Irish sketches, Mr. Ross."

"It's no a claw I want from ye, sir," said John Ross, grimly. "It's a 'scratch,' when some decent fellow some day puts me up for an Associate. It is what everybody looks for, I suppose; though I jalouse there'll be more gray nor red in my beard by that time."

"You shall have my 'scratch' and welcome; and I hope long before then," said the Academician; and then again he begged Mrs. Fitzgerald to come away from the neighborhood of her portrait, which she was not loath to do, for she was very hungry, she said, and one o'clock had arrived.

Presently Sir Cyril Smith appeared and carried the party off in a body, John Ross alone seeming shy or reluctant. But he was very soon put into a pleasant humor by his neighbor at table, who happened to be Mrs. Sydenham, who said she imagined he must be the friend on whose behalf Fitzgerald had endeavored to bribe her with sandwiches.

"That was no use," said he, bluntly.

"No, I should think not," said this pretty woman, with a charming smile. "I should think not, indeed. Not sandwiches. At my time of life one knows better than to eat sandwiches—"

"I wasna thinking of that, mum," said Ross; "I was thinking your husband ought not to be bothered with any such things. A man that can paint as he can paint should have nothing in the world to interfere with his time or attention; if he wastes a day, the country loses just so much—"

"Oh, but he takes great interest in the younger men. And I am very glad he thinks so highly of your pictures—it was not to you alone he said that; and—and, of course, you must be proud of the place they have got—"

"Oh, ay," he said, "the tod will find a hole somewhere—"

"I beg your pardon!"

But as he did not answer—or did not hear—she went

on to say that she understood he was again going to Ireland with the Fitzgeralds; and they were going early this year, were they not? and had he been allowed to see anything of the volume of poems—or poetical dramas—that Mr. Fitzgerald was understood to have finished in Italy, and that was now on the eve of publication? John Ross answered as best he could; but he was getting rather discontented, for there was nothing to drink at this needlessly sumptuous repast but thin, cold wine. At last, however, he said to the servant, who was in vain tempting him with various decanters,

“I say, my man, could you get me a wee droppie o’ whiskey?”

“Yes, sir; certainly, sir.”

And after that Mr. Ross proved a far more pleasant companion; and gave Mrs. Sydenham such a picture of the life at Boat of Garry, and such graphic accounts of the exploits of himself and his friends there, that she said that nothing but his description of the demon steam-yacht deterred her from begging for an invitation there and then.

After luncheon there was a movement to return to the pictures, and Fitzgerald seized the opportunity to bid them good-day.

“Where are you off to now?” his wife asked.

“I want to overhaul one or two of the libraries, if there’s time before dinner.”

“Let me go with you.”

“In that dress? You would be a pretty spectacle in Shoreditch.”

“I could remain in the hansom.”

“Get away with you! You are off duty; you are a helpless invalid, though you don’t look it. Stay with Mrs. Sydenham and see-your friends. My shooting-coat isn’t swell enough for that.”

“Very well,” she said. “When shall you be home?”

“At a quarter to seven, whatever happens. I left word there would be an enormous *table d’hôte*; so you can seize hold of all the nice people. Don’t forget John Ross; don’t lose sight of him. We will make John Ross the occasion; and we will get him to make a speech.”

“You will do nothing of the kind; I won’t have anybody tortured. Shall I ask the Giffords?”

“Yes.”

“And the Sydenhams?”

“If they have not had enough of us to-day already. Ask anybody you like who happens to be disengaged. It is John Ross's day, let him have a triumph in the evening.”

And in a couple of minutes thereafter he was in a hansom, making for Commercial Road East, and striving to extract a few items of intelligence from that morning's newspaper, which he had not before had time to glance over.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AT INISHEEN.

AND again we will let a few more years go by, bringing us to quite the other day, in fact. At the window of a room in the Imperial Hotel at Inisheen a small boy, apparently about eight or nine, is standing, regarding the carriage and pair below, which are being led off to the stable-yard. He is a good-looking little lad, with large, soft, pensive eyes, a square forehead, and curly hair—a healthy-looking little chap, too, though one foot is off the ground, and he is supporting himself with a stick. To him enters his father.

“Well, Master Frank, shall you be able to amuse yourself while I go out for a stroll? You see what comes of climbing after wood-pigeons' nests.”

“A good job, too,” remarked the small boy, with complacency.

“What is? spraining your ankle?”

“Yes. You wouldn't have brought me with you if it hadn't been for that, papa. Mamma said you were very busy, and I wasn't to interfere with you. I was to take great care not to be a trouble to you, she said, for you liked to be alone when you were finishing a book, and I wasn't to mind if you left me by myself. And I don't mind a bit.”

He glanced round the room. “And is this really the inn that your papa kept?”

“Yes, it is; perhaps you don't think much of it?”

“Well,” said the small boy, with delicacy, not wishing to wound his father’s feelings, “it isn’t *very* swell, is it?”

“When I was a boy, my lad, it was the only hotel in Inisheen, and it was regarded as a place of importance. See, here are your books. You’d better sit down for a while and give your foot a rest.”

“I like the stories you tell better than those in the books,” remarked Master Frank, regarding the volumes with anything but favor, “only mamma says I ought never to believe them.”

“Which, though?”

“The stories you tell. Mamma says you are always making a fool of people. Was it true, papa, about the man who went to India?”

“Really there are so many people go to India that I have forgotten.”

“But the man who went out to India, and he pretended to have a sunstroke; and then, when he came back, he was allowed to do anything he liked, for his friends were afraid of bringing it on again, and the police always let him off because he had been mad; and he lived such a merry life. Was that true, papa?”

“Well, if it had not happened, how would people have known anything about it?” was the evasive reply. “Now take a book; and put your foot up on a chair, while I go and see if there’s anybody in the place I know now. I don’t suppose there will be, since Andy the Hopper—do you remember the sketch of him that Mr. Ross made for you one night?”

“Oh yes, papa.”

“Well, he is away at Tramore now, they say; and I doubt whether there is a human being I know now in the town.”

And yet when he went out into the sunlight this older part of Inisheen did not seem to have changed much during the last seven years. If there was any difference, it lay rather between the Inisheen that he was accustomed to dream about and this present, every-day, rather commonplace Inisheen. This was the second time he had visited the little town since finally he had left it for London, and on each occasion the same rectification had to be made. Yes, there were the quiet, respectable-looking houses, and the shops, and the Town-hall; the wharves and quays, with tar-barrels and coals; the barks and brig-

antines stranded on the mud; and the broad waters of the bay; and the sunny green of the hills beyond. To get a wider view he climbed up the face of the steep slope on which the town is partly built; there were cottages here and there apparently clinging hazardously to the ascent; fragments of old ruins cropping up; cocks and hens fluttering among the dust or hiding among the nettles; children clambering over walls, topped with marjoram; and an old gentleman, in a jacket without sleeves, fast asleep in a damp and shady angle of a garden-wall which was profuse with moss and hart's-tongue fern. Then he came to the enclosures round the houses of the richer people on the summit of the hill, amid gardens and lush meadows; and from this height he could look down on the picturesque little harbor, and the rippling green waters of the bay, and the wide sand-banks left exposed by the tide, and also on the far expanse of sea, pale and blue in the hazy sunlight, with one or two dots of ships apparently making slowly in for the tiny port before a gentle southerly breeze.

He felt so much of a stranger here. No doubt, if he were to go through the shops down there he might discover this one or that who would perhaps recognize Master Willie; and no doubt if he were away up over the hills there ("the mountains" they called them) he could find a cabin or two where he would be welcomed by some aguish old crone, with many a "Glory be to God!" But of his old intimates, as he had learned from time to time, there was scarcely one left. His father had died many years before. Why, even the *Cork Chronicle*, which the Inisheen people used to take in chiefly because Master Willie put his poetry about Inisheen, and his songs and palaverings about the Inisheen girls, into it, existed no longer. When he drove up to the Imperial, the very hostler who took the horses had never heard of the Fitzgeralds who once had the place. And yet, as he looked at the quays and the houses and the harbor, Inisheen did not seem to have changed so much. It was he who was changed; and something else—was it his youth, or a remembrance of his youth, that, whether he thought of it or not, was always haunting him, and making Inisheen look strange?—seemed now far away.

He wandered down from this height, thinking he would go and have a look at the newer Inisheen that faced the

sea. As he was walking along the main thoroughfare of the older town—perhaps not noticing much—and passing one of the side streets leading to the quays, he heard an exclamation behind him—

“The Lord be marcfiful to us!”

He turned instantly and recognized old Molly, who for innumerable years had sold nuts and apples and oranges to the boys of Inisheen. The old woman struggled up from the barrel on which she was sitting.

“Och, God help us all, ’tis yourself, Masther Willie!” she said, and she seized his hand with her long skinny fingers. “Och, ’tis the great gintleman you are now, wid your horses and your carriages riding through the town. Shure I thought ’twas yourself, Masther Willie; and then I thought ’twas nansinse: and shure you’re come to take the place your father had before ye—his sowl’s in glory, amin! Oh, wirasthrue, but me back is broke wid the could nights! And yer honor’s coming back to the Impyrial now—and you’ll have a good word for ould Molly wid the sarvints?”

He had to explain to the ancient Molly—whose aspect, by the way, would have been more venerable had her gray hair been less dishevelled, and had she worn a dress more appropriate to her age and sex than an old soldier’s jacket, the scarlet of which had got sadly faded through exposure to wind and weather—that he had no intention of re-establishing the Fitzgeralds in the Imperial Hotel; and then he presented her with all the silver he could find in his pockets, and passed on.

How often he had walked along this very road, in the far bygone days, with the eager ambitions and wild desires of youth busy with the future! And now that he had attained to almost everything he had dreamed of—in certain directions to far more than ever he had dreamed of—to what did it all amount? Well, he had made many friends, known and unknown; and that was pleasant; and he strove to remain on kindly terms with them; and to do what little he could, in the way of writing, if that might be of any service to them, in as thorough and honest a fashion as was possible. But, so far as he could see, there was not anything in life much better than showing a picture-book to a sick child, or some such simple act of benevolence or charity; and in this respect he had entirely adopted the views of his wife. Neither he nor she was

concerned about the motives that might be imputed to them. If it was a luxury, they could afford it. If it was self-gratification, at least it did not harm others. If it was outraging the principles of political economy, the principles of political economy would have to look out for themselves. In short, both he and she, as it turned out, found themselves with so many things to do that they really had no time to sit down and construct analyses of the Moral Faculty.

This newer Inisheen out-fronting the sea was more changed than the older part of the town, for a number of new-looking villas had been added—most likely the summer residences of the Cork people. But it was pleasanter for him to turn his back on these, and find before him the old familiar picture—the spacious view that he was in the habit of conjuring up before his mental vision whenever he wanted to introduce a sense of light and width—perhaps a touch of solitariness—into his writing. Solitary enough it was. Nothing but the level miles of pale-brown sand; and the vast extent of glassy pale-blue sea; and between these the long thin lines of the ripples that came in and in, darkening in shadow, until suddenly there was a gleam of silver, thin as the edge of a knife, and then a curling over of white foam sparkling in the sun, and the protracted “*hs-ss-ss*” as the wave broke along the shore. A pale and placid picture; perhaps a trifle sad also; for with such a faint and fair background the mind is apt to set to work to put in figures—and these would be walking along the sand, naturally; and they might be young; and dreaming dreams.

Then he recollected the poor chap with the sprained ankle; and so he turned and walked leisurely back to the hotel; discovering, when he got there, that Master Frank had been engaged the while in carving his name, in bold letters, on one of the window-shutters.

“When I grow up, papa,” said he, contemplating this tentative effort at immortality, “I hope I shall be famous like you.”

“Who told you I was famous?” his father said, with a laugh.

“Mamma. I wish I could get such nice letters from people you don’t know; from America, and Canada, and as far away as where Robinson Crusoe lived. Sometimes

mamma reads them to me. What did you do to make the Queen call you 'well-beloved'?"

"What nonsense has got into your head now?"

"No, it is not," said Master Frank, pertinaciously. "Mamma read it out of a big book. The Queen said you were 'trusty and well-beloved.'"

"Oh, that is nothing. Don't you know, when the Queen appoints you a Royal Commissioner to inquire into anything, that is the phrase she uses. I suppose your mamma had got hold of that Blue-book—"

"But the Queen would not say so unless she meant it. She doesn't tell lies, does she?"

"Why, of course not. Well, Master Frank, until you are older we will postpone the subject, and in the mean time we will have some tea. I suppose you are aware that you may have late dinner with me to-night?"

"Just as you please, papa. Mamma said I was not to trouble you—"

"And you have remembered your lesson very well. In consideration of which I will tell you a story—"

"Oh, will you?" and immediately the small lad hobbled across from the window to his father's knee, looking up with his big girlish-looking eyes full of expectation; for the stories his papa told were far more wonderful than anything to be found in books.

"Not only that—but it is a story of a bull!"

"A *very* wild one?"

"A *fearfully* wild one."

There was a sort of sigh of delight.

"Well, this bull used to roam about just behind this very town of Inisheen; and it is very open there—plenty of bog-land—and he could see you from a great distance; and he'd come stalking along the road, right in the middle, and allow no one to pass. And he was especially savage with boys; and you wouldn't believe the roundabout ways we had to take—"

"Oh, were you one of them, papa?"

"I was alive then," the story-teller continued, evasively, "and I may have looked on and seen what the other boys did. But the terrible business about this beast was that he could hop over a wall with the greatest ease; and it was no use shutting a gate on him, if he meant to be after you. He was a terror to the whole district—especially to the boys; and we used to get angry—I mean they

used to get angry, and wonder what they would do to the bull if only they could get the chance. Then at last one of us—one of them hit on a plan. They went carefully along the road and picked out a place where the bog came close up, and where there were just two or three clumps of moss, so that you could cross over if you went lightly and watched your footing. Of course you remember what Bruce did at Bannockburn?"

"He dug pits and covered them over—"

"Precisely. Well, then, this was a sort of ambushade like that. I don't think ambushade is the right word; but it's good enough for a bull. Well, then, the next thing the boys did—"

"But you were one of them, papa?"

"I might be looking on. I might have gone round by the bog that day. At all events, they went to a person called Andy the Hopper, that I've often told you about; and Andy was a curious-minded creature, who always liked to have red sleeves when he could afford it to his jacket; and they got the loan of an old jacket with the red sleeves; and they spread that out on two sticks; and away they went along the road. And there, sure enough, was the bull. He didn't say anything; he only looked. Then they went on, cautiously, until they were within a certain distance; and there they stopped. The bull didn't move. Then they began to retreat a little—and you must know, Master Frank, that a bull always understands that as an invitation for him to come and chivy you. The bull came on a bit; stopped for a second; then gave a loud bellow; and then came on faster. This was precisely what those wicked boys wanted. For now they turned and took to their heels; and the bull came careering after them, and then at the spot they had marked they left the road, and went hopping across the bog, that was very wet at that time, for there had been much rain. Very well, then, you see, when the bull came tearing along, he had no notion of a strategy or an ambushade or anything of that kind; and he did not stop to consider that he was far heavier than a boy, and that his sharp hard feet would sink where theirs would just touch the little dry clumps; and so in he went with a splash and a struggle—and another splash and a struggle—and another splash and another struggle—always getting deeper and deeper into the thick black mud, and bellowing and roaring with rage.

You never saw anything like it. Mind you, when we stopped and looked, I won't say we weren't a little bit frightened; for if one of his fore-legs had got hold of a piece of good solid ground, we might have had another run for it, and he'd have knocked the whole town to smithereens before he'd have stopped. After a long time, however, he gave it up. He found his struggles useless; and when he bellowed, it wasn't 'Wait till I catch you;' it was, 'Who's going to get me out?'"

"Papa," said Master Frank, thoughtfully, "could you have got near him then?"

"Oh yes, I dare say. He was stuck fast."

"You could have got near him in safety?"

"Oh yes, I think so," answered the father, not doubting that the boy, who had been taught to be kind to all animals, had imagined some way of getting the poor bull out of his troubles.

"Then didn't you get a big stick and beat him over the head?" said Master Frank, eagerly.

"Well, no," said the papa, a little disappointed. "But I'll tell you what happened—it took nearly half the people of Inisheen to get that bull out; for they were all afraid to go and fasten the ropes; and when it did get on to dry land again it seemed anxious to reduce the population of the neighborhood. I don't think I saw that," the narrator added, demurely.

"You didn't wait to see it hauled out?" said Master Frank, with staring eyes.

"No; you see, Frankie, there were a lot of wicked boys about the place; and the people suspected they had inveigled the bull into the bog; and supposing I had been about just at that time—looking on, you know—well, they might have thought I had had a hand in it, and one might have got into trouble. It's always the best plan to keep away when you see a scrimmage going on. The most innocent people are sometimes suspected. Never you go near crowds."

Master Frank thought over this story for some time, and then he said in an absent kind of way,

"I believe it was you yourself, papa, that teased the bull into the bog."

They had late dinner together in the evening, and no doubt it was that circumstance that provoked Master Frank into unusual animation and talkativeness, in the

course of which he unlocked many a dark and secret cupboard of his mind, where he had stored away subjects or remarks for subsequent examination. He startled his father, for example, by suddenly, and *apropos* of nothing, asking him how it was possible for a man to have three grandmothers.

"I don't know what you mean," his father said.

"Why, don't you remember, papa, the organ-grinder coming to Hyde Park Gardens, and playing 'The Last Rose of Summer'?"

"No, I don't recollect that remarkable circumstance. I suppose he didn't remain very long."

"But don't you remember you asked mamma what sort of a man he could have been who first twisted the air about with variations; and then you began and told me all that you hoped had happened to him when he was alive?"

"Well, I don't remember that either."

"And you said you hoped he had three grandmothers, and never knew what his name was, because they kept bothering him—"

"I am not quite sure; but I think we must have been talking nonsense, Frankie."

"And mamma said you had invented enough evil things for him, and you might turn to the men who were cutting the tails off cattle and shooting at people here in Ireland."

"The less you say about that the better, Master Frank, for in this part of the country walls have ears."

"I know," said Master Frank, confidently, "that mamma will be very glad when you have done with the fishing and we all go back to England again."

"Nonsense!"

"But I heard her say so, papa!"

"She was having a little joke with you, Master Frank. You don't understand these deep questions yet, my lad. Don't you know that I am not a landlord, nor an Englishman, nor one who pays rent? So you see I can't do anything wrong; and we are as safe at Boat of Garry as in Hyde Park."

"I know mamma does not like you to go away fishing by yourself," said Master Frank, doggedly.

"But do I ever go away fishing by myself—or did I ever go away fishing by myself until you must needs set about spraining your ankle? And supposing there were

any of these rascals about Boat of Garry, which there are not; and supposing they were coming stealing along on tiptoe when I wasn't watching; and supposing you were standing by, with a gaff in your hand, and a gaff with a remarkably sharp steel point, what then? What would you do? You can lay hold of a salmon or a sea-trout smartly enough. Could you catch one of Captain Moonlight's men by the ear?"

The boy did not answer that, for he was evidently considering something with much care. At last he said, meditatively,

"I wish you were the king, papa, and then you would show the rascals something."

"But how? What should I do?"

"Kill the whole lot!" was the prompt answer.

"Well, that would teach them a lesson, wouldn't it?"

Dinner over, Fitzgerald drew in his chair to the fire—more by custom than for warmth, for the night was mild—and lit a cigar, and proceeded to look over a newspaper. This last performance was a sore trial for the patience of Master Frank, who doubtless considered that it would have been much more sensible to devote the time to a discussion of the affairs of the country between two congenial minds. As for himself, he scorned to seek refuge in books. Not having two legs that he could twist about the chairs in his usual fashion, he put the one at his disposal into every conceivable attitude, until he nearly succeeded in tilting the table over with his foot; then he tied a bit of string to a teaspoon, and twitched, to see if it would spin like a spoon-bait; then, he got out his pocket-knife and slowly and carefully sharpened the edge on the boards of a book, finishing up by carving his initials thereon, just to try the point, as it were; and then, as time went on, he grew suspicious.

"Papa," said he, "you are not going out, are you?" For, indeed, Fitzgerald had once or twice gone to the window and glanced outside.

"If I do," his father said, "it won't make any difference. It will soon be time for you to be off to bed. I may go out; but I shall not be long; and you will be sound asleep."

Nothing more was said for a while; Master Frank being engaged in drawing a portrait of Balbus on the title-page of his Latin Grammar. Then he said,

"Is it a beautiful night, papa?"

"Oh yes."

Then again—

"Is it a *very* beautiful night, papa?"

"The moon must be getting higher now," his father said, going to the window, and pushing the blind aside.

"Oh yes, it is a fine enough night."

The boy got hold of his stick and hobbled across the room.

"Let me look, papa. Oh, isn't it a beautiful night! What a pity it is we can't see the sea."

"Frank," said his father, putting his hand on the boy's head, "would you like to go with me?"

He looked up with a bright, eager look of assent and gladness; but instantly, with a great deal of bravery, he shook his head.

"I promised mamma not to bother you," he said, slowly. "And—and besides, papa, I can't walk."

He hung down his head a little, to hide the tears of disappointment that would rise to his eyes. His father was looking out of the window, and did not notice. But presently he said,

"Poor chap, you've had rather a dull afternoon! Look here, Frankie, I'll tell you what we'll do—as sure as ever was. The horses have done almost nothing to-day; supposing we were to get the carriage round? What do you say to that? We'll go for a drive, my lad; and then you'll not only see the sea in moonlight, but the bay also, and a wooded glen I was going to. What do you say to that?"

"Mamma won't be angry?" suggested Master Frank, doubtfully—but it was clear from his face that he regarded the proposal with immense delight.

"We will buy her something, Frankie, to pacify her, when we get back to Bantry. Now you go and sit down, and I will get hold of Murtough; and as soon as we can we'll have the carriage ready for you. But I can tell you, my lad, that wasn't how I was treated when I was a boy—there were no late dinners for me, or a carriage to take me out for a drive in the moonlight. I really don't know what this generation is coming to."

"But, papa, if you could have got it you would have taken it," said the boy, looking up.

"That's neither here nor there," his father said, as he

put on his hat and coat. "That's neither here nor there. What I say is that boys nowadays are spoiled; and especially boys that are allowed to come to Boat of Garry when they ought to be at their school at Campden Hill; and still more especially boys whose mothers buy for them a twelve-foot trout-rod before they've even got the length of *omnis Gallia*. Now don't you attempt to go down those stairs till I come and fetch you."

Fitzgerald seemed in the lightest and pleasantest of humors when finally he and his small boy had got themselves ensconced in the open landau, with an abundance of rugs over their knees. He had, indeed, been loath to leave the little chap for a second time that day, even though it was not very far from his bedtime; and he was glad to give him this unexpected trip as some compensation for the dulness of the afternoon. Moreover, the night was fine; the air was mild; the skies clear; Inisheen and its wide, still waters looked quite picturesque in the moonlight.

"And what would you say now, Master Frank," his papa asked, as they drove out from the town into the silence of the country, "if I were to tell you that I had a tryst with the fairies in the wooded glen I told you about?"

The boy looked up; he seldom knew whether his father was joking or in earnest.

"I did not think there were any fairies nowadays," was the answer.

"Well," his father continued, "if you ever make a tryst with Don Fierna and his little people to come and visit them once in every seven years, you will find it more and more difficult, as you grow older and older, to listen hard enough to hear them coming, and to look hard enough to see the sides of the glen opening and the long procession appearing. When you are young perhaps it is a little easier. Do you remember how they stole away Burd Helen into Elfin-land?"

"Oh, yes. You told me about that."

"Then you remember that Childe Rowland was the youngest of all her brothers. Do you think any of the older ones could ever have found out the dark tower, no matter how Merlin helped them? If Childe Rowland had not had the eyes of youth he never would have found his way, and I believe Burd Helen would have been in the dark tower still."

“I have never seen any,” was the small lad’s practical remark.

“Well, that is strange. But in any case you won’t mind waiting a little while in the carriage, when we get to the glen, and I will go down by myself, and if I hear or see anything I will come back and tell you.”

“Oh, but I know better than that, papa,” said the boy, shrewdly. “You are not going to look for any fairies. When you go away by yourself, it is to watch rabbits and other things, and write about them. I know very well. Whenever mamma sees you go out alone, without your fishing-rod, she always calls us back.”

“Oh, indeed. But then, you see, Frankie, you were never at Inisheen before; and strange things used to happen about here, many years ago, when I was young; and I don’t know what may not be seen in that glen. So you will remain in the carriage for a while, when we get there; and if I spy out the fairies down in the hollow, with their glowworm lamps, you know, I sha’n’t say a single word to them, but I’ll come back to the road at once and whistle for you. Do you understand?”

“That’s all nonsense, papa. I don’t believe there are any.”

“Wait and see.”

At length they arrived at a portion of the road that was shadowed over by a double row of elm-trees; and here Fitzgerald called on Murtough to stop, and got out, leaving Master Frank in the carriage.

“Now, you listen, Frankie,” said he, “and when I whistle make ready.”

“I could not go down into that glen with my sprained ankle, papa,” the boy said.

“People never know,” said he, as he went up and over the little bank by the roadside, “what they can do when they see fairies coming along. It is quite an event in one’s life.”

Indeed, it was with no great heaviness of heart, no very acute anguish of remembrance, that he now, for the second time, and in middle-age—that is to say, at seven-and-thirty—went to keep the tryst he had made at three-and-twenty. It was with a brisk enough step that he crossed the open glade, and then more cautiously made his way down the steep bank, through the brushwood, until once more he stood by the little scooped-out hollow in the rock,

into which the water fell with a continuous murmur. The place was quite unaltered. It might have been yesterday that he and Kitty had stood there, with their hands clasped, before he rowed her away back to Inisheen. It might have been yesterday that he had gone back to the place only to find himself standing there alone, conjuring up phantoms, and not then quite so reconciled to the fate that had befallen him.

Yes; that former visit, seven years before, had been a sharper thing. It seemed to him that then, for the first time, he had realized what this separation meant. Our other griefs and miseries over the loss of our loved ones who go away from us through the sad portal of death, keen as they may be, are in time solaced by a wistful hope of reunion. What is that but a temporary separation, if they are awaiting us yonder, with light on their faces? But this separation from one who, as we think, is to be linked with us through this brief life, and in death, and in the farther life beyond—that seemed to him the true separation, and the breaking down of faith, and a hopelessness for ever and ever. Something of the old misery had come back on him; the old pain had stirred again at his heart; the quick, sudden agony of the discovery of her falsehood had throbbled again, even after these years. It was so strange—his standing here on one side; on the other a vacant space, a voiceless air, a darkness where the light of her eyes ought to have been. That night was one not easily to be forgotten.

But now, seven years later, all that was over for the most part; and he sought out a bit of rock which afforded him a kind of seat, and sat down and listened to the monotonous gurgling and rushing of the water. He was scarcely sorry now that all that had happened in the olden time. It was a kind of pretty picture, mostly. Or, rather, it was a kind of well of romance and sentiment that he could dip into when he pleased for literary purposes. Nay, to tell the truth, had not this very journey been partly undertaken with some such purpose? It was like renewing one's youth to get into this realm of imagination again. That may have been the moral of his remarks to Master Frank about the increasing difficulty of finding out where the fairies were.

And yet, while he was thus convincing himself that he was a highly matter-of-fact person, and striving to regard

that episode in his youthful life as something apart from him, and inclined to wonder what influence on his writing these occurrences and despairs and all the rest of it may have had, some foolish fondness for the bygone days stole over him; and he would have been glad to know that Kitty was well, and looking pretty, and enjoying content. He had heard of her once or twice, but in the vaguest way. He did not know where she was living now. And indeed the only regret that possessed him at this moment was about the final portion of that vow that he and she had taken together. Why should there have been any hatred or revenge in these promises made by two young people who could know so little of what was before them? Kitty herself had begged of him to make it a love-night. He remembered the imploring look of her eyes; the very tone of her voice (and how sweet and soft and musical that was!). "*Oh, Willie, not that,*" she had said; "*let this be a love-night!*" Did he wish "*grief to be a guest in her house, and sorrow to dwell in her house forever*"? Surely not.

Kitty had made his life very beautiful for a time. Supposing that he had never met her at all—in these early years? Could he ever have understood quite so well that nameless witchery that makes so much of the wonder and joy of human existence and is the cause of so much of its misery? Could he have known quite so intimately what all the poets have been talking about since ever Helen came to Ilion's towers—with "*her young eyes still wounding where they looked*"? He never would have known how keen the blue of the speedwell was, had not she and he together found it on those far uplands, that now seemed to him as if they must have been very near the sky, so clear and vivid was the light over them. Poor Kitty! Did she ever sing now "*Then farewell, but whenever you welcome the hour*"? Had she ever come to Cork again, and climbed up to Audley Place, and thought of the old days? There was no reason why she should not have made such a pilgrimage; her husband was well off; Kitty would have a maid of her own now; and she used rather to like travelling about.

The night was just as still as that on which he and Kitty had come there; there was not a breath of wind stirring the bushes overhead; the only sound was the prattling of the streamlet in the silence.

“It sounds like laughing,” he was thinking. “Perhaps it has listened to all the nonsense that has been talked by the different lovers who have come here; and it may have understood all the time, and gone on chuckling. It does sound as if it was laughing. To think of all the secrets it has heard; and the vows; and never a word of warning as to what it knew of the results. Is it malicious, or only sardonic—that chuckling down there? But it is better to make a joke of it. Everything gets laughed away in time.”

All that bygone period seemed far away—and beautiful in a fashion, now that the pain of parting with it was over. It had enriched his life; there were innumerable pictures he could conjure up—always with Kitty smiling and pleasant as the central figure; perhaps, too, it had given him a key to unlock some of the secrets and mysteries of existence. Was there any need to think harshly of poor Kitty, or to speak of betrayal or falsehood? We do not quarrel with the dead. She was as one dead to him; and the memory of her was not tragic, or even pathetic, but rather pretty, with a vague and poetical charm around it. It had been pathetic and tragic enough, and darkened with terror and pain and the wrestlings of despair; but now, when he thought of her, he saw a laughing and pleasant Kitty, rather inclined to be impertinent, and wandering carelessly in sweet woodland ways. It was never for Kitty to rise to the level of this other and beautiful nature that he knew; that was linked with his; that provoked his wonder and admiration the farther that he saw of its nobleness and simplicity. No; Kitty was a charming little coquette; tender in a way; not without her good points, and a very fitting heroine for love-verses in the *Cork Chronicle*.

And yet—and yet—there was a kind of tremulousness about those pictures that rose before him; he could not quite coldly regard them, and ticket off their literary value; sometimes a trace of the nameless fascination and glamour of youth came wandering down through the years—a memory of something that he had seen in Kitty’s eyes. Was it the night in the South Mall; the streets all swimming with mud and rain; the gas-lamps shining golden on the pavements; these two under one umbrella, and Kitty suddenly turning her face to him? Or was it the Sunday morning up by the barracks; a spring morning,

with the rooks cawing, and the air sweet; and Kitty, not knowing he was there, and going by him, and then raising the tear-filled eyes with astonishment and a quick glad light of love? Kitty had pretty eyes in that olden time; and a pretty voice, too, whether she was laughing, or singing about the Bells of Shandon, or only teasing poor old Miss Patience.

He rose. To look over one's life in this way, however satisfied one may be with the existing result, is a sad kind of thing; and the stream down there in the semi-darkness seemed no longer chuckling and laughing at the follies and dreams of youth, but rather saying something of a farewell as it hurried away to the sea. "*Farewell—farewell!*" So lives pass to the unknown and are forgotten.

He laid hold of one of the bushes, and clambered up into the moonlight again, and crossed the open space to the wall; then for a second he turned and glanced up and down the little valley, that lay there so white and still. He was glad it had chanced to be so beautiful a night. This was a peaceful picture that he would carry away in his memory. In bygone years he had looked forward to a solitary keeping of his tryst with a shuddering dread; but what was there to dread about it? It was a pretty place; and he had awakened some recollections that had a sort of half-pathetic poetic fancy about them. That was all. He wished he could paint the glen as it looked now; but he thought it would be difficult to convey the sense of solitude and remoteness that the perfect silence produced.

He mounted the wall and leaped down into the road.

"Well, Master Frank," said he, lightly, "I am sorry to have kept you waiting so long; I almost think you'll want some supper when you get back."

But he found the boy standing up in the carriage, and looking wonderingly along the road behind them.

"Papa," said he, with an expression almost of alarm on his face, "did you see her? Did you see the lady?"

Fitzgerald stopped for a moment: he was just about entering the carriage.

"What lady?" he said, in a perfectly calm voice.

"Didn't you see her? A lady in mourning," the boy said; and now he seemed to be more reassured. "I don't know who she is. I don't know her; but she came up and spoke to me."

His father regarded him, apparently unable to say anything; his hand still grasping the door of the carriage.

"She said, 'Is your name Willie?' I said 'No; my name is Frank.' Then she said, 'But it is Frank Fitzgerald, is it not?' I said 'Yes.' Then she said, 'Will you let me kiss you?' and she was crying when she lifted her veil. And then she went away along the road back there."

Fitzgerald glanced along the road; there was no one visible. Then, with every appearance of composure, he stepped into the carriage, shut the door, and said, briefly,

"Home, Murtough."

"Papa," said the boy, presently, "who was she?"

"How can I tell? Don't bother me—not at present."

There was a strange look on his face as they drove on in silence. Frank remembered his mother's injunctions; when his father seemed disinclined for talking, he could keep his mouth shut. And indeed they were near to Inisheen before Fitzgerald again spoke.

"Don't you see, Frankie," he said, carelessly, "it is the most natural thing in the world? Of course there are plenty of visitors always coming down from Cork to the sea-side—to the villas I showed you; and on such a beautiful night why should not any one go out for a walk? Or the lady who spoke to you may belong to some house in the neighborhood; there is a little village, Carrigha, not more than a quarter of a mile farther on. Why, it's the simplest thing in the world. It is just the night for any one to come out for a stroll. But I am beginning to doubt whether there was any such person. You were thinking of the fairies, Frankie—wasn't that it?"

"Murtough saw her, papa."

"Oh well; a visitor in the neighborhood, no doubt," he said, absently.

"But how did she know my name?" said the boy, still wondering.

"That's what she didn't know," said his father—though he seemed to be talking about one thing, and thinking about another. "As for guessing at Fitzgerald—that is nothing. It is simple to make a guess like that. Every one about here is a Fitzgerald or a M'Carthy. That is nothing. No doubt she belongs to Carrigha. What was she like, did you notice?"

He spoke with indifference, but did not look at the boy.

“N—no,” the small lad said, doubtfully, “for she was crying—and—and I was frightened.”

“But she kissed you?”

“Oh yes.”

His father was silent for some time.

“Perhaps the lady has lost a little boy of about your age,” he said, by and by.

“Perhaps that is it,” Master Frank said, thoughtfully, “for she was dressed all in black.”

Then they rattled through the streets of the little town, and drew up at the door of the hotel.

“Now, Master Frank,” said his father, when they were both together in the sitting-room, “you must be up early to-morrow, for we have to drive all the way to Cappoquin, and we ought to be there as soon as Mr. Ross.”

“To-morrow? So soon as that? I would like to have stayed some days at Inisheen, papa,” said Master Frank, wistfully.

“Why?”

“To see all the places you have told me about. I would like to have seen the cabin where Jerry the tailor’s hawks are; and—and the place where the bull went into the bog; and mamma said I was to be sure to cut her a piece off the hawthorn-tree.”

“What hawthorn-tree?”

“The one you used to climb up—and the branches spread out at the top; and you used to have a seat there, and a book, and no one could see you—”

“Do you know, Master Frank, that cutting memorial bits off trees and carving your name on window-shutters are among the most heinous of crimes? And it would be no use your remaining in Inisheen, and trying to see all these places, for you can’t get about easily at present, poor chap! No; some other time we will have a longer stay here; and perhaps we will come over in the winter; and then you might go out with me for a night after the wild-duck; wouldn’t that be fine?”

“Oh yes, papa.”

“And meanwhile we must get away at once from Inisheen, so as not to keep Mr. Ross waiting at Cappoquin or Lismore. When I was at your age I could easily get ready to start by seven.”

“Do you mean seven to-morrow morning, papa?”

“Yes.”

“Very well. I will be ready by seven.”

And still he lingered about the room, without saying good-night.

“Papa,” said he at length, “when I told you about the lady, why did your face turn so white?”

His father was sitting at the fire, staring into it, and did not hear.

“Come and say good-night, my lad,” he said, presently, “and I will call you at half-past six if you are not up. You are sure you won’t have any supper? Very well, good-night.”

“But I was asking you, papa—”

“Asking me what?”

“Why did your face turn so white when you were in the road, and I told you I had seen the lady?”

“Nonsense—nonsense! Your head has got filled with fancies to-night, my lad—you were too close to Elfin-land, perhaps. Good-night; and don’t dream of Don Fierna.”

“Good-night, papa.”

The next morning was again fine; and they had every prospect of a beautiful drive along the banks of the richly-wooded river. And when Master Frank, seated in the landau, and having his sprained ankle carefully propped and cushioned, understood that he was to see something more of the Blackwater, he almost forgot his disappointment over missing the various places at Inisheen he had expected to visit.

“Of course, papa,” said he, “you’ll show me the very spot where you fell in and lost the salmon?”

“We shall go near there, anyway,” said his father, as they started, and drove away through the town.

“And you’ll show me the moor-hen’s nest, won’t you?”

“What moor-hen’s nest?” for, indeed, this boy’s memory was wonderful.

“Don’t you remember, papa, you told me about a moor-hen that had got a bit of wicker-work by chance and had pieced it into her nest? I *should* like to see that.”

“Bless the boy! do you imagine that the nest is in existence yet? All these things that I have told you about happened years and years ago.”

They were now away from the houses; and he rose in the carriage, and turned to have a last look at the place they were leaving. Inisheen looked fair enough in the

early light. The shallow green waters of the bay, the boats by the quays, the Town-hall with its golden cock, and the terraced hill with its gardens were all shining in the morning sun; and far beyond the harbor the pale-blue sea was broken here and there with sharp glints of white, for there was a fresh breeze blowing in from the south. When he sat down again there was an absent look on his face.

“That moor-hen’s nest, Master Frankie,” said he, regarding the thoughtful eyes of the boy, “belongs to a time long gone by—and things change. Poor lad! that is a lesson you will have to learn for yourself some day.”

THE END.



YOLANDE.

BY

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"A DAUGHTER OF HETH," ETC.



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YOLANDE.

CHAPTER I.

RELEASED FROM CHATEAU COLD FLOORS.

LATE one evening in April, in the private sitting-room on the first floor of a hotel in Albemarle Street, a member of the British House of Commons was lying back in an easy-chair, having just begun to read, in an afternoon journal, an article about himself. He was a man approaching fifty, with what the Scotch call "a salt-water face"; that is to say a face tanned and reddened with wind and weather, sharp of feature, and with hair become prematurely quite silver white. At a first glance he seemed to have the air of an imperative, eager, aggressive person; but that impression was modified when by any accident you met his eyes, which were nervous, shrinking, and uncertain. Walking in the street, he rarely saw any one; perhaps he was too pre-occupied with public affairs; perhaps he was sensitively afraid of not being able to recognize half-remembered faces. When sitting alone, slight noises made him start.

This was what the man with the thin red face and the silver white hair was reading:—

"By his amendment of last night, which, as every one anticipated, was defeated by an overwhelming majority, the member for Slagpool has once more called attention to the unique position which he occupies in contemporary politics. Consistent only in his hopeless inconsistency, and only to be reckoned on for the wholly unexpected, one wonders for

what particular purpose the electors of Slagpool ever thought of sending Mr. Winterbourne to Parliament, unless, indeed, it were to make sure that their town should be sufficiently often heard of in the councils of the nation. A politician who is at once a furious Jingo in foreign affairs and an ultra-revolutionary at home; an upholder of the divine rights and liberties of the multitude, who at the same time would, if he could, force them to close every public-house in the country, alike on Sunday and Saturday; a virulent opponent of Vivisection, who nevertheless champions the Game Laws, and who is doubtful about the Abolition of Capital Punishment, probably because he would like to reserve to himself the right of hanging poachers: it may be conceded that such a member of Parliament if he is not to be counted on by any party, or by any section or sub-section of any party—if, indeed, he is ordinarily a good deal more dangerous to his allies than to his enemies—may at least do some service to his constituents by continually reminding the country of their existence, while ministering on the same occasions to his own inordinate vanity. For it is to this—it is to an inordinate vanity, spurred on by an irritable and capricious temper—that we must look for the cause of those spasmodic championships and petulant antagonisms, those erratic appearances and disappearances, those sudden alliances, and incomprehensible desertions, which have made of the member for Slagpool the very whirligig and teetotum of modern English politics.”

When he had got thus far he stopped.

“It sounds like the writing of a young man,” he was thinking. “But perhaps it is true. Perhaps that is what I am like. The public press is a mirror. I wonder if that is how I appear to Yolande?”

He heard a footstep outside, and immediately thrust away the newspaper from him, face downward. The next moment the door of the room was opened, and the framework of the door became the framework of a living picture. Mr. Winterbourne’s face lightened up with pleasure.

The picture framed by the doorway was that of a young girl of eighteen, singularly tall and strikingly fair, who stood there hesitating, timid, half laughing.

“Look,” she said. “Is it your idea?”

“*Is it your idea!*” he repeated, peevishly. “Yolande, you are getting worse and worse instead of better. Why don’t you say, ‘Is this what you meant?’”

"Is this what you meant?" she said, promptly, and with a slight foreign accent.

His eyes could not dwell on her for two seconds together and be vexed.

"Come to the mirror, child, and put on your hat, and let me see the whole thing properly."

She did as she was bid, stepping over to the fireplace, and standing before the old-fashioned mirror as she adjusted the wide-brimmed Rubens hat over the ruddy gold of her hair. For this was an experiment in costume, and it had some suggestion of novelty. The plain gown was of a uniform cream white, of some rough towel-like substance that seemed to cling naturally to the tall and graceful figure; and it was touched here and there with black velvet, and the tight sleeves had black velvet cuffs; while the white Rubens hat had also a band of black velvet round the bold sweep of the brim. For the rest, she wore no ornaments but a thick silver necklace round her throat, and a plain silver belt round her waist, the belt being a broad zone of solid metal, untouched by any graver.

But any one who had seen this young English girl standing there, her arms uplifted, her hands busy with her hat, would not have wasted much attention on the details of her costume. Her face was interesting, even at an age when gentleness and sweetness are about the only characteristics that one expects to meet with. And although no mere catalogue of her features—the calm clear brow; the wide-apart gray-blue eyes; the aquiline nose; the unusually short upper lip and beautiful rounded chin; her soft and wavy hair glistening in its ruddy gold; and her complexion, that was in reality excessively fair, only that an abundance of freckles, as well as the natural rose-color of youth in her cheeks, spoke of her not being much afraid of the sun and of the country air—although no mere enumeration of these things is at all likely to explain the unnamable grace that attracted people to her, yet there was at least one expression of her face that could be accounted for. That unusually short upper lip, that has been noted above, gave aslight pensive droop to the mouth whenever her features were in repose; so that when she suddenly looked up with her wide wondering, timid, and yet trustful eyes, there was something pathetic and wistful there. It was an expression absolutely without intention; it was inexplicable, and also winning; it seemed to convey a sort

of involuntary unconscious appeal for gentleness and friendship, but beyond that it had no significance whatsoever. It had nothing to do with any sorrow, suffered or foreshadowed. So far the girl's existence had been passed among the roses and lilies of life; the only serious grievance she had ever known was the winter coldness of the floors in the so-called chateau in Brittany where she had been educated. And now she was emancipated from the discipline of the Chateau Cold Floors, as she had named the place; and the world was fair around her; and every day was a day of gladness to her from the first "Good-morning" over the breakfast table to the very last of all the last and lingering "Good-nights" that had to be said before she would let her father go down to put in an appearance at the House.

This must be admitted about Yolande Winterbourne, however, that she had two very distinct manners. With her friends and intimates she was playful, careless, and not without a touch of humorous wilfulness; but with strangers, and especially with strangers abroad, she could assume in the most astonishing fashion the extreme coldness and courtesy of an English miss. Remember, she was tall, fair, and English-looking; that, when all the pretty, timid trustfulness and merriment were out of them, her eyes were wide apart and clear and contemplative; and further, that the good dames of the Chateau Cold Floors had instructed her as to how she should behave when she went travelling with her father, which happened pretty often. At the *table d'hôte*, with her father present, she was as light-hearted, as talkative, as pleasant as any one could wish. In the music-room after dinner, or on the deck of a steamer, or anywhere, with her father by accident absent, she was the English miss out and out, and no aside conversations were possible. "So proud, so reserved, so English," thought many an impressionable young foreigner who had been charmed with the bright, variable, vivacious face as it had regarded him across the white table cover and the flowers. Yolande's face could become very calm, even austere on occasion.

"Is it what you meant?" she repeated, turning to him from the mirror. Her face was bright enough now.

"Oh, yes," said he, rather reluctantly. "I—I thought it would suit you. But you see, Yolande,—you see—it is very pretty—but for London—to drive in the Park—in London—wouldn't it be a little conspicuous?"

Her eyes were filled with astonishment; his rather wandered away nervously to the table.

“But, papa, I don’t understand you! Everywhere else you are always wishing me to wear the brightest and lightest of colors. I may wear what I please—and that is only to please you, that is what I care about only—anywhere else: if we are going for a walk along the Lung’ Arno, or if we go for a drive in the Prater, yes, and at Oatland Park, too, I can not please you with enough bright colors; but here in London the once or twice of my visits—”

“Do speak English, Yolande,” said he, sharply “Don’t hurry so.”

“The once or twice I am in London, oh, no! Everything is too conspicuous! Is it the smoke, papa. And this time I was so anxious to please you!—all your own ideas; not mine at all. But what do I care?” She tossed the Rubens hat on to the couch that was near, “Come! What is there about a dress? It will do for some other place, not so dark and smoky as London. Come—sit down papa—you do not wish to go away to the House yet! You have not finished about Godfrey of Bouillon.”

“I am not going to read any more Gibbon to you to-night, Yolande,” said he; but he sat down, all the same in the easy-chair, and she placed herself on the hearthrug before him, so that the soft ruddy gold of her hair touched his knees. It was a pretty head to stroke.

“Oh, do you think I am so anxious about Gibbon, then?” she said, lightly, as she settled herself into a comfortable position. “No. Not at all. I do not want any more Gibbon. I want you. And you said this morning there would be nothing but stupidity in the House to-night.”

“Well, now, Miss Inveigler, just listen to this,” said he, laying hold of her by both her small ears. “Don’t you think it prudent of me to show up as often as I can in the House—especially when there is a chance for a division—so that my good friends in Slagpool mayn’t begin to grumble about my being away so frequently? And why am I away? Why do I neglect my duties? Why do I let the British Empire glide on to its doom? Why, but that I may take a wretched, schoolgirl—a wretched, small-brained impertinent, prattling schoolgirl—for her holidays, and show her things she can’t understand and plough through museums and picture-galleries to fill a mind that is no better than a sieve? Just

think of it. The British Empire going headlong to the mischief all for the sake of an empty-headed schoolgirl !”

“Do you know, papa, I am very glad to hear that,” she said, quietly.

“Glad are you ?”

“Yes,” said she, nestling closer to him ; “for now I think my dream will soon be coming true.”

“Your dream ?”

“My dream—the ambition of my life,” said she, seriously. “It is all I wish for and hope for. Nothing else—nothing else in the world.”

“Bless us all !” said he, with a touch of irony. “What wonderful ambition is this ?”

“It is to make myself indispensable to you,” she said, simply.

He took his hand from her ears and put them on her hair, for there were some bits of curls and semi-ringlets about her neck that wanted smoothing.

“You are not indispensable, then ?” said he.

“Listen now, papa ; it is your turn,” she said. “Surely it is a shame that you have wasted so much time on me, through so many years, always coming to see me and take me away, perhaps not a week between, and I am glad enough, for it was always expectation and expectation, and my things always ready, and you, poor papa, wasting all your time, and always on the route ; and that such a long way to Rennes. Even at Oatlands Park the same—up and down, up and down, by rail, and then long beautiful days that were very good to me, but were stupid to you when you were thinking of the House all the time. Very well, now, papa ; I have more sense now ; I have been thinking : I want to be indispensable to you ; I want to be in London with you always ; and you shall never have to run away idling, either to the Continent or to Oatlands Park ; and you shall never have to think that I am wearying for you, when I am always with you in London. That is it now ; that I wish to be your private secretary.”

Her demand once made, she turned up her face to him ; he averted his eyes.

“No, no, Yolande,” he said, hastily, and even nervously. “London won’t do for you ; it—it wouldn’t do at all. Don’t think of it even.”

“Papa,” said she, “what other member of Parliament, with so much business as you have, is without a private

secretary? Why should you answer all those letters yourself? For me, I will learn politics very quickly; I am studying hard; at the chateau I translated all your speeches into Italian for exercises. And just to think that you have never allowed me to hear you speak in the House! When I come to London—yes, for five minutes or half an hour at a time—the ladies whom I see will not believe that I have never once been in the—the what is it called?—for the ladies to listen in the House? No, they cannot believe it. They know all the speakers; they have heard all the great men; they spend the whole of the evening there, and have many come to see them—all in politics. Well, you see, papa, what a burden it would be taking off your hands. You would not always have to come home and dine with me, and waste so much of the evening in reading to me—no, I should be at the House, listening to you, and understanding everything. Then all the day here, busy with your letters. Oh, I assure you I would make prettier compliments to your constituents than you could think of; I would make all the people of Slagpool who write to you think you were the very best member they could choose. And then—then I should be indispensable to you.”

“You are indispensable to me, Yolande. You are my life. What else do I care for?” he said, hurriedly.

“You will pardon me, papa, if I say it is foolish. Oh, to think now! One’s life is more important than that, when you have the country to guard.”

“They seem to think there,” said he, with a sardonic smile, and he glanced at the newspaper, “that the country would be better off without me.”

It was too late to recall this unfortunate speech. He had thrust aside the newspaper as she entered, dreading that by accident she might see the article, and be wounded by it; but now there was no help for it: the moment he had spoken she reached over and took up the journal, and found her father’s name staring her in the face.

“Is it true, Yolande?” said he, with a laugh. “Is that what I am like?”

As she read, Yolande tried to be grandly indifferent—even contemptuous. Was it for her, who wished to be of assistance to her father in public affairs, to mind what was said about him in a leading article? And then, in spite of herself, tears slowly rose and filled the soft gray-blue eyes, though she kept her head down, vainly trying to hide them

And then mortification at her weakness made her angry, and she crushed up the paper twice and thrice, and hurled it into the fire; nay, she seized hold of the poker and thrust and drove the offending journal into the very heart of the coals. And then she rose, proud and indignant, but with her eyes a little wet, and with a toss of her pretty head, she said:—

“It is enough time to waste over such folly. Perhaps the poor man has to support a family; but he need not write such stupidity as that. Now, papa, what shall I play for you?”

She was going to the piano. But he had risen also.

“No, no, Yolande. I must be off to the House. There is just a chance of a division; and perhaps I may be able to get in a few words somewhere, just to show the Slagpool people that I am not careering about the Continent with my schoolgirl. No, no; I will see you safe in your room, Yolande; and your lamp lit, and everything snug: then—good-night.”

“Already?” she said, with a great disappointment in her face. “Already?”

“Child, child, the affairs of this mighty empire—”

“What do I care about the empire!” she said.

He stood and regarded her calmly.

“You are a nice sort of a person to wish to be private secretary to a member of Parliament!”

“Oh, but if you will only sit down for five minutes, papa,” she said, piteously, “I could explain such a lot to you—”

“Oh yes, I know. I know very well. About the temper madame was in when the curls fell out of her box.”

“Papa, it is you who make me frivolous. I wish to be serious—”

“I am going, Yolande.”

She interposed:

“No. Not until you say, ‘I love you.’”

“I love you.”

“‘And I forgive you.’”

“And I forgive you.”

“Everything?”

“Everything.”

“And I may go out to-morrow morning, as early as ever I like, to buy some flowers for the breakfast table?”

But this was hard to grant.

"I don't like your going out by yourself, Yolande," said he, rather hesitatingly. "You can order flowers. You can ring and tell the waiter—"

"The waiter!" she exclaimed. "What am I of use for then, if it is a waiter who will choose flowers for your breakfast table, papa? It is not far to Convent Garden."

"Take Jane with you, then."

"Oh yes."

So that was settled; and he went upstairs with her to see that her little silver reading-lamp was properly lit; and then he bade her the last real good-night. When he returned to the sitting-room for his hat and coat there was a pleased and contented look on his face.

"Poor Yolande!" he was thinking; "she is more shut up here than in the country; but she will soon have the liberty of Oatlands Park again."

He had just put on his coat and hat, and was giving a last look round the room to see if there was anything he ought to take with him, when there was a loud, sharp crash at the window. A hundred splinters of glass fell on to the floor; a stone rolled over and over to the fireplace. He seemed bewildered only for a second; and perhaps it was the startling sound that had made his face grow suddenly of a deadly pallor; the next second—noiselessly and quickly—he had stolen from the room, and was hurriedly descending the stair to the hall of the hotel.

CHAPTER II.

THE SHADOW BEHIND.

THE head waiter was in the hall, alone, and staring out through the glass door. When he heard some one behind him he turned quickly, and there was a vague alarm in his face.

"The—the lady, sir, has been here again."

Mr. Winterbourne paid no heed to him, passed him hastily, and went out. The lamplight showed a figure standing there on the pavement—the figure of a tall woman, dark and pale, who had a strange, dazed look in her eyes.

"I thought I'd bring you out!" she said tauntingly, and with a slight laugh.

"What do you want?" he said, quickly, and under his breath. "Have you no shame, woman? Come away. Tell me what you want."

"You know what I want," she said sullenly. "I want no more lies." Then an angrier light blazed up in the impassive, emaciated face. "Who has driven me to it, if I have to break a window? I want no more lies and hidings. I want you to keep your promise; and if I have to break every window in the House of Commons, I will let everybody know. Whose fault is it?"

But her anger seemed to die away as rapidly as it had arisen. A dull, vague, absent look returned to her face.

"It is not my fault."

"What madness have you got hold of now?" he said, in the same low and nervous voice; and all his anxiety seemed to be to get her away from the hotel. "Come along and tell me what you want. You want me to keep my promise—to you, in this condition?"

"It is not my fault," she repeated, in a listless kind of way; and now she was quite obediently and peaceably following him, and he was walking toward Piccadilly, his head bent down.

"I suppose I can guess who sent you," he said, watching her narrowly. "I suppose it was not for nothing you came to make an exhibition of yourself in the public streets. They asked you to go and get some money?"

This seemed to put a new idea into her head; perhaps that had been his intent.

"Yes. I will take some money if you like," she said, absently. "They are my only friends now—my only friends. They have been kind to me: they don't cheat me with lies and promises; they don't put me off and turn me away when I ask for them. Yes, I will take them some money."

And then she laughed—a short, triumphant laugh.

"I discovered the way to bring some one out," she said, apparently to herself.

By this time they had reached the corner of Piccadilly, and as a four-wheeled cab happened to be passing, he stopped it, and himself opened the door. She made no remonstrance; she seemed ready to do anything he wished.

"Here is some money. I will pay the driver."

She got into the cab quite submissively and the man was given the address, and paid. Then the vehicle was driver off, and he was left standing on the pavement, still somewhat bewildered, and not conscious how his hands were trembling.

He stood uncertain only for a second or so; then he walked rapidly back to the hotel.

"Has Miss Winterbourne's maid gone to bed yet?" he asked of the landlady.

"Oh no, sir; I should think not sir," the buxom person answered: she did not observe that his face was pale and his eyes nervous.

"Will you please tell her, then, that we shall be going down to Oatlands Park again to-morrow morning? She must have everything ready, but she is not to disturb Miss Winterbourne to-night."

"Very well, sir."

Then he went into the coffee-room, and found the head waiter.

"Look here," said he (with his eyes averted); "I suppose you can get a man to put a pane of glass in the window of our sitting-room—the first thing in the morning? There has been some accident, I suppose. You can have it done before Miss Winterbourne comes down, I mean?"

He slipped a sovereign into the waiter's hand.

"I think so, sir. Oh yes, sir."

"You must try to have it done before Miss Winterbourne comes down."

He stood for a moment, apparently listening if there was any sound upstairs; and then he opened the door again and went out. Very slowly he walked away through the lamp-lit streets, seeing absolutely nothing of the passers-by, or of the rattling cabs and carriages: and although he bent his steps Westminster-ward, it was certainly not the affairs of the nation that had hold of his mind. Rather he was thinking of that beautiful fair young life—that young life so carefully and tenderly cherished and guarded, and all unconscious of this terrible black shadow behind it. The irony of it! It was this very night that Yolande had chosen to reveal to him her secret hopes and ambition: she was to be always with him: she was to be "indispensable"; the days of her banishment were to be now left behind; and these two, father and daughter, were to be inseparable companions henceforth and forever. And his reply? As he

walked along the half-deserted pavements, anxiously revolving many things, and dreaming many dreams about what the future might have in store for her, and regarding the trouble and terrible care that haunted his own life, the final summing up of all his doubts and fears resolved itself into this : If only Yolande were married ! The irony of it ! She had besought him, out of her love for him, and out of her gratitude for his watchful and unceasing care of her, that she should be admitted into a closer companionship ; that she should become his constant attendant, and associate, and friend ; and his answer was to propose to hand her over to another guardianship altogether—the guardianship of a stranger. If only Yolande were married !

The light was burning on the clock tower, and so he knew the House was still sitting ; but he had no longer any intention of joining in any debate that might be going forward. When he passed into the House (and more than ever he seemed to wish to avoid the eyes of strangers) it was to seek out his friend John Shortlands, whose rough common-sense and blunt counsel had before now stood him in good stead and served to brace up his unstrung nerves. The tall, corpulent, big-headed iron-master—who also represented a northern constituency—he at length found in the smoking-room, with two or three companions, who were seated round a small table, and busy with cigars and brandy and soda. Winterbourne touched his friend lightly on the shoulder.

“Can you come outside for a minute?”

“All right.”

It was a beautiful, clear, mild night, and seated on the benches on the Terrace there were several groups of people—among them two or three ladies, who had no doubt been glad to leave the stuffy Chamber to have tea or lemonade brought them in the open, the while they chatted with their friends, and regarded the silent, dark river and the lights of the Embankment and Westminster Bridge. As Winterbourne passed them, he could not but think of Yolande's complaint that she had never even once been in the House of Commons. These were, no doubt, the daughters of wives or sisters of members : why should not Yolande also be sitting there ? It would have been pleasant for him to come out and talk to her—pleasanter than listening to a dull debate. Would Yolande have wondered at the strange night picture—the broad black river, all quivering with golden

reflections; the lights on the bridge; the shadowy grandeur of this great building reaching far overhead into the starlit skies? Others were there; why not she?

The Terrace of the House of Commons is at night a somewhat dusky promenade, when there does not happen to be moonlight; but John Shortlands had sharp eyes; and he instantly guessed from his friend's manner that something had happened.

"More trouble?" said he, regarding him.

"Yes," said the other. "Well, I don't mind—I don't mind, as far as I am concerned. It is no new thing."

But he sighed, in spite of his resigned way of speech.

"I have told you all along, Winterbourne, that you brought it on yourself. You should ha' taken the bull by the horns."

"It is too late to talk of it—never mind that now," he said, impatiently. "It is about Yolande I want to speak to you."

"Yes?"

Then he hesitated. In fact, his lips trembled for the briefest part of a second.

"You won't guess what I am anxious for now," he said, with a sort of uncertain laugh. "You wouldn't guess it in a month, Shortlands. I am anxious to see Yolande married."

"Faith, that needn't trouble you," said the big iron-master, bluntly. "There'll be no difficulty about that. Yolande has grown into a thundering handsome girl. And they say," he added, jocosely, "that her father is pretty well off."

They were walking up and down slowly; Mr. Winterbourne's face absent and hopeless at times, at times almost piteous, and again lightening up as he thought of some brighter future for his daughter.

"She can not remain any longer at school," he said at length, "and I don't like leaving her by herself at Oatlands Park or any similar place. Poor child! Do you know what her own plans are? She wants to be my private secretary. She wants to share the life that I have been leading all these years."

"And so she might have done, my good fellow, if there had been any common-sense among the lot o'ye."

"It is too late to speak of that now," the other repeated, with a sort of nervous fretfulness. "But indeed it is hard on the poor girl. She seems to have been thinking seri-

ously about it. And she and I have been pretty close companions, one way or another, of late years. Well, if I could only see her safely married and settled—perhaps living in the country, where I could run down for a day or so—her name not mine—perhaps with a young family to occupy her and make her happy—well, then, I think I should be able to put up with the loss of my private secretary. I wonder what she will say when I propose it. She will be disappointed. Perhaps she will think I don't care for her—when there is just not another creature in the world I do care for; she may think it cruel and unnatural."

"Nonsense, nonsense, man. Of course a girl like Yolande will get married. Your private secretary! How long would it last? Does she look like the sort of girl who ought to be smothered up in correspondence or listening to debates? And if you're in such a mighty hurry to get rid of her—if you want to get her married at once—I'll tell you a safe and sure way—send her for a voyage on board a P. and O. steamer."

But this was just somewhat too blunt; and Yolande's father said, angrily,—

"I don't want to get rid of her. And I am not likely to send her anywhere. Hitherto we have travelled together, and we have found it answer well enough, I can tell you. Yolande isn't a bale of goods, to be disposed of to the first bidder. If it comes to that, perhaps she will not marry any one."

"Perhaps," said the other, calmly.

"I don't know that I may not throw Slagpool over and quit the country altogether," he exclaimed, with a momentary recklessness, "Why shouldn't I? Yolande is fond of travelling. She has been four times across the Atlantic now. She is the best companion I know; I tell you I don't know a better companion. And I am sick of the way they're going on here." (He nodded in the direction of the House.) "Government? They don't govern; they talk. A Parliamentary victory is all they think about, and the country going to the mischief all the time. No matter, if they get their majority, and if they can pose before the world as the most moral and exemplary government that ever existed. I wonder they don't give up Gibraltar to Spain, and hand over Malta to Italy; and then they ought to let Ireland go because she wants to go; and cer-

tainly they ought to yield up India, for India was stolen; and then they might reduce the army and the navy, to set an example of disarmament, so that at last the world might see a spectacle—a nation permitted to exist by other nations because of its uprightness and its noble sentiments. Well, that has nothing to do with Yolande, except that I think she and I could get on very well even if we left England to pursue its course of high morality. We could look on—and laugh, as the rest of the world are doing.”

“My dear fellow,” said Shortlands, who had listened to all this high treason with calmness, “you could no more get on without the excitement of worrying the Government than without meat and drink. What would it come to? You would be in Colorado, let us say, and some young fellow in Denver, come in from the plains, would suddenly discover that Yolande would be an adorning feature for his ranch, and she would discover that he was the handsomest young gentleman she ever saw, and then where would you be? You wouldn’t be much good at a ranch. The morning papers would look tremendously empty without the usual protest against the honorable member for Slagpool so grossly misrepresenting the action of the Government. My good fellow, we can’t do without you in the House; we might as well try to do without the Speaker.”

For a few seconds they walked up and down in silence; at last Winterbourne said, with a sigh,—

“Well, I don’t know what may happen; but in the meantime I think I shall take Yolande away for another long trip somewhere—”

“Again? Already?”

“I don’t care where; but the moment I find myself on the deck of a ship, and Yolande beside me, then I feel as if all care had dropped away from me. I feel safe; I can breathe freely. Oh, by the way, I meant to ask if you knew anything of a Colonel Graham? You have been so often to Scotland shooting. I thought you might know.”

“But there are so many Grahams.”

“Inverstroy, I think, is the name of his place.”

“Oh, *that* Graham. Yes, I should think so—a lucky beggar. Inverstroy fell plump into his hands some three or four years ago, quite unexpectedly—one of the finest estates in Inverness-shire. I don’t think India will see him again.”

"His wife seems a nice sort of woman," said Mr. Winterbourne, with the slightest touch of interrogation.

"I don't know her. She is his second wife. She is a daughter of Lord Lynn."

"They are down at Oatlands just now. Yolande has made their acquaintance, and they have been very kind to her. Well, this Colonel Graham was saying the other evening that he felt as though he had been long enough in the old country, and would like to take a P. and O. trip as far as Malta, or Suez, or Aden, just to renew his acquaintance with the old route. In fact, they proposed that Yolande and I should join them."

"The very thing!" said John Shortlands, facetiously. "What did I say? A P. and O. voyage will marry off anybody who is willing to marry."

"I meant nothing of the kind," said the other, somewhat out of temper; "Yolande may not marry at all. If I went with these friends, of hers, it would not be 'to get rid of her,' as you say."

"My dear fellow, don't quarrel with me," said his friend, with more consideration than was habitual with him. "I really understand your position very well. You wish to see Yolande married and settled in life and removed from—from certain possibilities. But you don't like the sacrifice, and I don't wonder at that; I admit it will be rather rough on you. But it is the way of the world: other people's daughters get married. Indeed, Winterbourne, I think it would be better for both of you. You would have less anxiety. And I hope she'll find a young fellow who is worthy of her; for she is a thundering good girl: that's what I think: and whoever he is, he'll get a prize, though I don't imagine you will be over well disposed toward him, old chap."

"If Yolande is happy, that will be enough for me," said the other, absently, as Big Ben overhead began to toll the hour of twelve.

By this time the Terrace was quite deserted; and after some little further chat (Mr. Winterbourne had lost much of his nervousness now and of course all his talking was about Yolande, and her ways, and her liking for travel, and her anxiety to get rid of her half-French accent, and so forth) they turned into the House, where they separated, Winterbourne taking his seat below the gangway on the Government side, John Shortlands depositing his magnificent bulk on one of the Opposition benches.

There was a general hum of conversation. There was also, as presently appeared, some laborious discourse going forward on the part of a handsome-looking elderly gentleman—a gentleman who, down in the country, was known to be everything that an Englishman could wish to be: an efficient magistrate, a plucky rider to hounds, an admirable husband and father, and a firm believer in the Articles of the Church of England. Unhappily, alas! he had acquired some other beliefs. He had got it into his head that he was an orator; and as he honestly did believe that talking was of value to the state, that it was a builder up and maintainer of empire, he was now most seriously engaged in clothing some rather familiar ideas in long and Latinized phrases, the while the House murmured to itself about its own affairs, and the Speaker gazed blankly into space, and the reporters in the gallery thought of their courting days, or of their wives and children, or of their supper, and wondered when they were to get home to bed. The speech had a half-somnolent effect; and those who were so inclined had an excellent opportunity for the dreaming of dreams.

What dreams, then, were likely to visit the brain of the member for Slagpool, as he sat there with his eyes distraught? His getting up some fateful evening to move a vote of want of confidence in the Government? His appearance on the platform of the Slagpool Mechanics' Institute, with the great mass of people rising and cheering and waving their handkerchiefs? Or perhaps some day—for who could tell what changes the years might bring—his taking his place on the Treasury Bench there?

He had got hold of a blue-book. It was the Report of a Royal Commission; but of course all the cover of the folio volume was not printed over—there were blank spaces. And so, while those laborious and ponderous sentences were being poured out to inattentive ears, the member for Slagpool began idly and yet thoughtfully to pencil certain letters up at one corner of the blue cover. He was a long time about it; perhaps he saw pictures as he slowly and contemplatively formed each letter; perhaps no one but himself could have made out what the uncertain pencilling meant. But it was not of politics he was thinking. The letters that he had faintly pencilled there—that he was still wistfully regarding as though they could show him things far away—formed the word *YOLANDE*. It was like a lover.

CHAPTER III.

PREPARATIONS FOR FLIGHT.

NEXT morning his nervous anxiety to get Yolande away at once out of London was almost pitiful to witness, though he strove as well as he could to conceal it from her. He had a hundred excuses. Oatlands was becoming very pretty at that time of the year. There was little of importance going on in the House. London was not good for the roses in her cheeks. He himself would be glad of a breather up St. George's Hill, or a quiet stroll along to Chertsey. And so forth, and so forth.

Yolande was greatly disappointed. She had been secretly nursing the hope that at last she might be allowed to remain in London, in some capacity or another, as the constant companion of her father. She had enough sense to see that the time consumed in his continually coming to stay with her in the country must be a serious thing for a man in public life. She was in a dim sort of way afraid that these visits might become irksome to him, even although he himself should not be aware of it. Then she had her ambitions too. She had a vague impression that the country at large did not quite understand and appreciate her father; that the people did not know him as she knew him. How could they, if he were to be forever forsaking his public duties in order to gad about with a girl just left school? Never before, Yolande was convinced, had the nation such urgent need of his services. There were a great many things wrong which he could put right; of that she had no manner of doubt. The Government was making a tyrannical use of a big majority to go their own way, not heeding the warnings and protests of independent members; this amongst many other things ought to be attended to. And it was at such a time, and just when she had revealed to him her secret aspiration that she might perhaps become his private secretary, that he must needs tell her to pack up, and insist on quitting London with her. Yolande could not understand it: but she was a biddable and obedient kind

of creature ; and so she took her place in the four-wheeled cab without any word of complaint.

And yet, when once they were really on their way from London—when the railway-carriage was fairly out of the station—her father's manner seemed to gain so much in cheerfulness that she could hardly be sorry they had left. She had not noticed that he had been more anxious and nervous that morning than usual ; but she could not fail to remark how much brighter his look was now they were out in the clearer air. And when Yolande saw her father's eyes light up like this—as they did occasionally—she was apt to forget about the injury that was being done to the affairs of the empire. They had been much together, these two ; and anything appertaining to him was of keen interest to her ; whereas the country at large was something of an abstraction ; and the mechanical majority of the Government—for which she had a certain measure of contempt—little more than a name.

“Yolande,” said he (they had the compartment to themselves), “I had a talk with John Shortlands last night.”

“Yes, papa ?”

“And if England slept well from that time until this morning it was because she little knew the fate in store for her. Think of this, child : I have threatened to throw up my place in Parliament altogether, letting the country go to the mischief if it liked ; and then the arrangement would be that you and I, Yolande—now just consider this—that you and I should start away together and roam all over the world, looking at everything, and amusing ourselves, going just where we liked, no one to interfere with us—you and I all by ourselves—now, Yolande !”

She had clasped her hands with a quick delight.

“Oh, papa, that would indeed—”

But she stopped ; and instantly her face grew grave again.

“Oh no,” she said, “no ; it would not do. Last night, papa, you were reproachful of me—”

“‘Reproachful of me !’” he repeated, mockingly.

“Reproachful to me ?” she said, with inquiring eyes. But he himself was not ready with the correct phrase ; and so she went on : “Last night you were reproachful that I had taken up so much of your time ; and though it was all in fun, still it was true ; and now I am no longer a school-

girl; and I wish to help you if I can, and not be merely tiresome and an incumbrance—”

“You are so much of an incumbrance, Yolande!” he said, with a laugh.

“Yes,” she said, gravely, “you would tire of me if we went away like that. In time you would tire. One would tire of always being amused. All the people that we see have work to do; and some day—it might be a long time—but some day you would think of Parliament, and you would think you had given it up for me—”

“Don’t make such a mistake!” said he. “Do not consider yourself of such importance, miss. If I threw over Slagpool, and started as a Wandering Jew—I mean we should be two Wandering Jews, you know, Yolande—it would be quite as much on my own account as yours—”

“You would become tired of being amused. You could not always travel,” she said. She put her hand on his hand. “Ah, I see what it is,” she said, with a little laugh. “You are concealing. That is your kindness, papa. You think I am too much alone; it is not enough that you sacrifice to-day, to-morrow, next day, to me; you wish to make a sacrifice altogether; and you pretend you are tired of politics. But you can not make me blind to it. I see—oh, quite clearly I can see through your pretence!”

He was scarcely listening to her now.

“I suppose,” he said, absently, “it is one of those fine things that are too fine ever to become true. Fancy now, the two of us just wandering away wherever we pleased, resting a day, a week, a month, when we came to some beautiful place—all by ourselves in the wide world!”

“I have often noticed that, papa,” she said—“that you like to talk about being away, about being remote—”

“But we should not be like the Wandering Jew in one respect,” he said, almost to himself. “The years would tell. There would be a difference. Something might happen to one of us.”

And then, apparently, a new suggestion entered his mind. He glanced at the girl opposite him, timidly and anxiously.

“Yolande,” said he, “I—I wonder now—I suppose at your age—well, have you ever thought of getting married?”

She looked up at him with her clear, frank eyes, and when she was startled like that her mouth had the slight

pathetic droop, already noticed, that made her face so sensitive and charming.

"Why, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of times!" she exclaimed, still with the soft clear eyes wondering.

His eyes were turned away. He appeared to attach no importance to this confession.

"Of course," she said, "when I say I have thought hundreds of times of getting married, it is about not getting married that I mean. No. That is my resolution. Oh, many a time I have said that to myself. I shall not marry—never—no one."

In spite of himself his face suddenly brightened up, and it was quite cheerfully that he went on to say:—

"Oh, but, Yolande, that is absurd. Of course you will marry. Of course you must marry.

"When you put me away, papa."

"When I put you away," he repeated, with a laugh.

"Yes," she continued, quite simply. "That was what Madame used to say. She used to say, 'If your papa marries again, that is what you must expect. It will be better for you to leave the house. But your papa is rich; you will have a good portion; then you will find some one to marry you, and give you also an establishment.' 'Very well,' I said; 'but that is going too far, Madame, and until my papa tells me to go away from him I shall not go away, and there is not any necessity that I shall marry any one.'"

"I wish Madame had minded her own affairs," Mr. Winterbourne said, angrily. "I am not likely to marry again. I shall not marry again. Put that out of your head, Yolande, at once and for always. But as for you—well, don't you see, child, I—I can't live forever, and you have got no very near relatives, and, besides, living with relatives isn't always the pleasantest of things, and I should like to see your future quite settled, I should like to know that—that—"

"My future!" Yolande said, with a light laugh. "No, I will have nothing to do with a future: is not the present very good? Look: here I am, I have you; we are going out together to have walks, rides, boating—is it not enough? Do I want any stranger to come in to interfere? No; some day you will say, 'Yolande, you worry me. You stop my work. Now I am going to attend to Parliament, and you have got to marry, and go off, and not worry me.' Very well. It is enough. What I shall say is this: Papa,

choose for me. What do I know? I do not know, and I do not care. Only a few things are necessary—are quite entirely necessary. He must not talk all day long about horses. And he must be in Parliament. And he must be on your side in Parliament. How much is that—three?—three qualifications. That is all.”

Indeed, he found it was no use trying to talk to her seriously about this matter. She laughed it aside. She did not believe there was any fear about her future. She was well content with the world as it existed: was not the day fine enough, and Weybridge, and Chertsey, and Esher and Moulsey all awaiting them? If her father would leave his Parliamentary duties to look after themselves, she was resolved to make the most of the holiday.

“Oh, but you don’t know,” said he, quite falling in with her mood—“you don’t know, Yolande, one fifteenth part of what is in store for you. I don’t believe you have the faintest idea why I am going down to Oatlands at this minute.”

“Well, I don’t, papa,” she said, “except through a madness of kindness.”

“Would it surprise you if I asked Mrs. Graham to take you with them for that sail to Suez or Aden?”

She threw up her hands in affright.

“Alone?” she exclaimed. “To go away alone with strangers?”

“Oh no; I should be going also—of course.”

“But the time—”

“I should be back for the Budget. Yolande,” said he, gravely, “I am convinced—I am seriously convinced—that no one should be allowed to sit in Parliament who has not visited Gibraltar, and the island of Malta, and such places, and seen how the empire is held together, and what our foreign possessions are—”

“It is only an excuse, papa—it is only an excuse to give me another holiday.”

“Be quiet. I tell you the country ought to compel its legislators to go out in batches—paying the expenses of the poorer ones, of course—and see for themselves what our soldiers and sailors are doing for us. I am certain that I have no right to sit in Parliament until I have visited the fortifications of Malta, and inspected the Suez Canal.”

“Oh, if it is absolutely necessary,” Yolande said, with a similar gravity.

"It is absolutely necessary. I have long felt it to be so. I feel it is a duty to my country that we should personally examine Malta."

"Very well, papa," said Yolande, who was so pleased to find her father in such good-humor that she forbore to protest, even though she was vaguely aware that the confidence of the electorate of Slagpool was again being abused in order that she should enjoy another long and idling voyage with the only companion whom she cared to have with her.

The Grahams were the very first people they saw when they reached Oatlands. Colonel Graham—a tall, stout, grizzled, good-natured looking man—was lying back in a garden seat, smoking a cigar and reading a newspaper, while his wife was standing close by, calling to her baby, which plump small person was vainly trying to walk to her, under the guidance of an ayah, whose dusky skin and silver ornaments and flowing garments of Indian red looked picturesque enough on an English lawn. Mrs. Graham was a pretty woman, of middle height, with a pale face, a square forehead, short hair inclined to curl, and dark gray eyes with black eyelashes and black eyebrows. But along with her prettiness, which was only inoderate, she had an exceedingly fascinating manner, and a style that was at least attractive to men. Women, especially when they found themselves deserted, did not like her style; they said there was rather too much of it; they said it savored of the garrison flirt, and was obviously an importation from India; and they thought she talked too much, and laughed too much, and altogether had too little of the dignity of a matron. No doubt they would have hinted something about the obscurity of her birth and parentage had that been possible. But it was not possible, for everybody knew that when Colonel Graham married her, as his second wife, she was the only daughter of Lord Lynn, who was the thirteenth baron of that name in the peerage of Scotland.

Now this pretty, pale-faced, gray-eyed woman professed herself overjoyed when Mr. Winterbourne said there was a chance of his daughter and himself joining her and her husband on their suggested P. and O. trip; but the lazy, good-humored looking soldier glanced up from his paper and said,—

"Look here, Polly, it's too absurd. What would people say? It's all very well for you and me: we are old Indians, and don't mind; but if Mr. Winterbourne is coming with us

—and you, Miss Winterbourne—we must do something more reasonable and Christian-like than sail out to Suez or Aden and back, all for nothing.”

“But nothing could suit us better,” Yolande’s father said. Indeed, he did not mind where or why he went, so long as he got away from England, and Yolande with him.

“Oh, but we must do something,” Colonel Graham said. “Look here. When we were at Peshawur a young fellow came up there—you remember young Ismat, Polly?—well, I was of some little assistance to him; and he said any time we wanted to see something of the Nile I could have his father’s dahabeeyah—or rather one of them, for his father is Governor of Merhadj, and a bit of a swell, I fancy. There you are now. That would be something to do. People wouldn’t think we were idiots. We could have our sail all the same to Suez, and see the old faces at Gib, and Malta; then we could have a skim up the Nile a bit, and, by the way, we shall have it all to ourselves just now—”

“The very thing!” exclaimed Mr. Winterbourne, eagerly, for his imagination seemed easily captured by the suggestion of anything remote. “Nothing could be more admirable! Yolande, what do you say?”

Yolande’s face was sufficient answer.

“My dear child,” said Mrs. Graham, in an awful whisper, “have you got a Levinge?”

“A what?” said Yolande.

“You have not? And you might have gone to Egypt, at this time of the year, without a Levinge?”

“What are you talking about the time of the year, Polly!” her husband cried, peevishly. “It is the only time of the year that the Nile is tolerable. It is no longer a cockney route. You have the whole place to yourself—at least, so Ismat Effendi assured me; and if he has given me a wrong tip, wait till I get hold of him by the nape of his Egyptian neck! And you needn’t frighten Miss Yolande about mosquitoes or any of the other creatures of darkness; for you’ve only to get her one of those shroud things—”

“Just what I was saying,” his wife protested.

Indeed, she seemed greatly pleased about this project; and when they went in to lunch they had a table to themselves, so as to secure a full and free discussion of plans. Mrs. Graham talked in the most motherly way to Yolande; and petted her. She declared that those voyages to

America, of which Yolande had told her, had nothing of the charm and variety and picturesqueness of the sail along the African shores. Yolande would be delighted with it; with the people on board; with the ports they would call at; with the blue of the Mediterranean Sea. It was all a wonder, as she described it.

But she was a shrewd-headed little woman. Very soon after lunch she found an opportunity of talking with her husband alone.

"I think Yolande Winterbourne prettier and prettier the longer I see her," she said, carelessly.

"She's a good-looking girl. You'll have to look out, Polly. You won't have the whole ship waiting on you this time."

"And very rich—quite an heiress, they say."

"I suppose Winterbourne is pretty well off."

"He himself has nothing to do with the firm now, I suppose?"

"I think not."

"Besides, making engines is quite respectable. Nobody could complain of that."

"I shouldn't, if it brought me in £15,000 or £20,000 a year," her husband said, grimly. "I'd precious soon have Inverstronan added on to Inverstroy."

"Oh," she said, blithely, "talking about the North, I haven't heard from Archie for a long time. I wonder what he is about—watching the nesting of the grouse, I suppose. I say, Jim I wish you'd let me ask him to go with us. It's rather dull for him up there; my father isn't easy to live with. May I ask him?"

She spoke very prettily and pleadingly.

"He'll have to pay his own fare to Suez and back, then," her husband answered, rather roughly.

"Oh yes; why not?" she said, with great innocence. "I am sure poor Archie is always willing to pay when he can, and I do wish my father would be a little more liberal. I am sure he might. Every inch of shooting and fishing was let last year! even the couple of hundred yards along the river that Archie always has had for himself. I don't believe he threw a fly last year—"

"He did on the Stroy," her husband said, gloomily.

"That was because you were so awfully good to him," said his wife, in her sweetest manner. "And you can be

awfully good to people, Jim, when you don't let the black bear ride on your shoulders."

Then Mrs. Graham, smoothing her pretty short curls, and with much pleasure visible in the pretty dark gray eyes, went to her own room, and sat down and wrote as follows:—

"DEAR ARCHIE,—Jim's good-nature is beyond anything. We are going to have a look at Gib, again, and at Malta, just for auld lang syne; and then Jim talks of taking us up the Nile a bit; and he says you ought to go with us, and you will only have to pay your passage to Suez and back—which you could easily save out of your hats and boots, if you would only be a little less extravagant, and get them in Inverness instead of in London. Mr. Winterbourne, the member for Slagpool, is going with us, and he and Jim will halve the expenses of the Nile voyage. Mr. Winterbourne's daughter makes up the party. She is rather nice, I think, but only a child. Let me know at once. There is a P. and O. on the 17th; I think we shall catch that; Jim and the captain are old friends.

Your loving sister,
"POLLY."

She folded up the letter, put it in an envelope, and addressed it to:—

*The Hon. the Master of Lynn,
Lynn Towers,
by Inverness, N. B.*

CHAPTER IV.

A FAREWELL TO ENGLAND.

A VOYAGE in a P. and O. steamer is so familiar a matter to thousands of English readers that very little need be said about it here in detail, except, indeed, in so far as this particular voyage affected the fortunes of these one or two people. And Yolande's personal experiences began early.

The usual small crowd of passengers was assembled in Liverpool Street Station, hurrying, talking, laughing, and scanning possible ship-companions with an eager curiosity, and in the midst of them Yolande, for a wonder—her father having gone to look after some luggage—found herself for the moment alone. A woman came into this wide, hollow-resounding station, and timidly and yet anxiously scanned the faces of the various people who were on the platform adjoining the special train. She was a respectably dressed person, apparently a mechanic's wife, but her features bore the marks of recent crying; they were all "begrutten," as the Scotch say. She carried a small basket. After an anxious scrutiny—but it was only the women she regarded—she went up to Yolande.

"I beg your pardon, miss," she said; but she could say no more, for her face was tremulous.

Yolande looked at her, thought she was drunk, and turned away, rather frightened.

"I beg your pardon, miss;" and with that her trembling hands opened the basket, which was filled with flowers.

"No, thank you, I don't want any," said Yolande, civilly. But there was something in the woman's imploring eyes that said something to her. She was startled, and stood still.

"Are—are you going farther than Gibraltar, miss?"

"Yes. Yes, I think so," said Yolande, wondering.

There were tears running down the woman's face. For a second or two she tried to speak, ineffectually; then she said:—

"Two days out from—from Gibraltar—would you be so kind, miss, as to put—these flowers—on the water? My little girl was buried at sea—two days out—"

"Oh, I understand you," said Yolande, quickly, with a big lump in her throat. "Oh yes, I will. I am so sorry for you—"

She took the basket. The woman burst out crying, and hid her face in her hands, and then turned to go away. She was so distracted with her grief that she had forgotten even to say "Thank you." At the same moment Mr. Winterbourne came up, hastily and angrily.

"What is this?"

"Hush, papa! The poor woman had a little girl buried at sea; these are some flowers—"

Yolande went quickly after her, and touched her on the shoulder.

"Tell me," she said, "what was your daughter's name?"

The woman raised her tear-stained face. "Jane. We called her Janie; she was only three years old; she would have been ten by now. You won't forget, miss; it was—it was two days beyond Gibraltar that—that we buried her."

"Oh, no; do you think I could forget?" Yolande said; and she offered her hand. The woman took her hand and pressed it, and said, "God bless you, miss! I thought I could trust your face;" then she hurried away.

Yolande went back to her father, who, though closely watching her, was standing with the Grahams; and she told them (with her own eyes a little bit moist) of the mission with which she had been intrusted; but neither she nor they thought of asking why, out of all the people about to go down by the steamer train, this poor woman should have picked out Yolande as the one by whom she would like to have those flowers strewn on her child's ocean grave. Perhaps there was something in the girl's face that assured the mother that she was not likely to forget.

And at last the crowd began to resolve itself into those who were going and those who were remaining behind; the former establishing themselves in the compartments, the latter talking all the more eagerly as the time grew shorter. And Mrs. Graham was in despair because of the non-appearance of her brother.

"There!" she said to her husband, as the door of the carriage was finally locked, and the train began to move out of the station, "I told you—I told you I should not be surprised. It is just like him—always wanting to be too clever. Well, his coolness has cost him something this time. I told you I should not at all be surprised if he missed the train altogether."

"I don't think the Master's finances are likely to run to a special," her husband said, good-humoredly.

"Oh, it is too provoking!" exclaimed the pretty young matron (but, with all her anger, she did not forget to smooth her tightly fitting costume as she settled into her seat). "It is too provoking! I left Baby at home more on his account than on any one else's. If there was the slightest sound, I knew he would declare that Baby had

been crying all the night through. 'There never was a better baby—never! Now, was there ever, Jim?'

"Well, I can't answer for all the babies that ever were in the world," her husband said, in his easy, good-natured way; "but it is a good enough baby, as babies go."

"It is the very best tempered baby I ever saw or heard of," she said, emphatically; and she turned to Yolande. 'Just think, dear, of my leaving Baby in England for two whole months, and mostly because I knew my brother would complain. And now he goes and misses the train—through laziness, or indifference, or wanting to be too sharp—

"I should think that Baby would be much better off on land than on board ship," said Yolande, with a smile.

"Of course, Miss Winterbourne," the colonel said. "You're quite right. A baby on board a ship is a nuisance."

"Jim! You don't deserve—

"And there's another thing," continued the stout and grizzled soldier, with the most stolid composure. "I've seen it often on board ship. I know what happens. If the mother of the baby is old or ugly, it's all right; the baby is let alone. But if she's young and good-looking, it's wonderful how the young fellows begin and pet the baby, and feed it up on toffy and oranges. What do they know? Hang 'em, they'd fetch up pastry from the saloon and give it to a two-year-old. That ain't good for a baby."

"Poor Archie!" said his wife, rather inconsequently; "it will be such a disappointment for him."

"I'll tell you what it is," said Colonel Graham; "I believe he has never heard that the P. and O. ships don't stop at Southampton now. Never mind, Polly; he can go overland, if he wants to catch us up at Cairo."

"And miss the whole voyage!" she exclaimed, aghast. "And forfeit his passage money? Fancy the cost of the railway journey to Brindisi!"

"Well, if people will miss trains, they must pay the penalty," her husband remarked, quietly; and there was an end of that.

At Tilbury there was the usual scramble of getting the luggage transferred to the noisy little tender; and the natural curiosity with which every one was eager to scan the great and stately vessel which was to be their floating home for many a day. And here there was a surprise for at least one of the party. When, after long delays, and after a hurried steaming out into the river, the tender was

drawing near the side of the huge steamer, of course all eyes were turned to the decks above, where the picturesque costumes of the lascar crew were the most conspicuous points of color. But there were obviously a number of other people on board, besides the dusky crew and their English officers.

"There he is—I can make him out," observed Colonel Graham.

"Who?" his wife asked.

"Why, the Master of Lynn," he answered, coolly.

"Well, I never!" she exclaimed, in either real or affected anger. "Shan't I give it to him! To think of his causing us all this disquietude!"

"Speak for yourself, Polly," her husband said, as he regarded a group of young men who were up on the hurricane-deck leaning over the rail and watching the approach of the tender. "I wasn't much put out, was I? And apparently he hasn't been, for he is smoking a cigar and chatting to—yes, by Jove! it's Jack Douglas, and young Mackenzie of Sleat; oh, there's Ogilvy's brother-in-law—what do you call him?—the long fellow who broke his leg at Bombay; there's young Fraser, too, eyeglass and all—a regular gathering of the clans. There'll be some Nap going among those boys!"

"I hope you won't let Archie play, then," his wife said, sharply. But she turned with a charming little smile to Yolande. "You mustn't think my brother is a gambler, you know, dear; but really some of those young officers play far beyond their means, and Archie is very popular amongst them I am told."

But by this time everybody was scrambling on to the paddle-boxes of the tender, and from thence ascending to the deck of the steamer. The Master of Lynn was standing by the gangway awaiting his sister. He was a young man of four or five and twenty, slim, well built, with a pale olive complexion and a perfectly clean-shaven face; and he had the square forehead, the well-marked eyebrows, and the pleasant gray eyes with the dark eyelashes that his sister had. But he had not her half-curly hair, for his was shorn bare, in soldier fashion, though he was not a soldier.

"How are you, Graham? How are you, Polly?" said he.

"Well, I like your coolness!" his sister said, angrily. "Why were you not at the station? Why did you not tell

us? Of course we thought you had missed the train. I wish you would take the trouble to let people know what you are about.—Let me introduce you to Miss Winterbourne. Yolande dear, this is my brother Archie.—Mr. Winterbourne, my brother, Mr. Leslie.—Well, now, what have you to say for yourself? ”

He had thrown away his cigar.

“Not much,” said he, smiling good-naturedly and taking some wraps and things from her which her husband had selfishly allowed her to carry. “I went down to see some fellows at Chatham last night, and of course I stayed there, and came over in the morning. Sorry I vexed you. You see, Miss Winterbourne, my sister likes platform parade; she likes to have people round her for half an hour before the train starts; and she likes to walk up and down, for it shows off her figure and her dress: isn’t that so, Polly? But you hadn’t half your display this morning, apparently. Where’s Baby? Where’s Ayah?”

“You know very well. You would have been grumbling all the time if I had brought Baby.”

“Well,” said he, looking rather aghast, “if you’ve left Baby behind on my account I shall have a pleasant time of it. I don’t believe you. But tell me the number of your cabin, and I’ll take these things down for you. I’m on the spardeck, thank goodness!”

“Miss Winterbourne’s cabin is next to mine; so you can take her things down too.”

“No, thank you,” said Yolande, who was looking out for her luggage (her maid being in a hopeless state of bewilderment), and who had nothing in her hand but the little basket. “I will take this down myself by and by.”

There was a great bustle and confusion on board; friends giving farewell messages; passengers seeking out their cabins; the bare-armed and barefooted lascars, with their blue blouses and red turbans, hoisting luggage on to their shoulders and carrying it along the passages. Mr. Winterbourne was impatient.

“I hate this—this confusion and noise,” he said.

“But, papa,” said Yolande, “I know your things as well as my own. Jane and I will see to them when they come on board. Please go away and get some lunch—please! Everything will be quiet in a little while.”

“I wish we were off,” he said, in the same impatient way. “This delay is quite unnecessary. It is always the

same. We ought to have started before now. Why doesn't the captain order the ship to be cleared?"

"Papa dear, do go and get places at the table. The Grahams have gone below. And have something very nice waiting for me. See, there comes your other portmanteau now; and there is only the topee-box; and I know it because I put a bit of red silk on the handle. Papa, do go down and get us comfortable places—I will come as soon as I have sent your topee-box to your cabin. I suppose we shall be near the Grahams."

"Oh, I know where Mrs. Graham will be," her father said, peevishly. "She will be next the captain. She is the sort of woman who always sits next the captain."

"Then the captain is very lucky, papa," said Yolande, mildly, "for she is exceedingly nice; and she has been exceedingly kind to me."

"I suppose the day will come when this captain, or any other captain, would be just as glad to have you sit next him," he said.

"Papa," she said, with a smile, "are you jealous of Mrs. Graham for my sake? I am sure I do not wish to sit next the captain; I have not even seen him yet that I know of."

But this delay, necessary or unnecessary, made him irritable and anxious. He would not go to the saloon until he had seen all the luggage—both his and Yolande's—despatched to their respective cabins. Then he began to inquire why the ship did not start. Why were the strangers not packed off on board the tender and sent ashore? Why did the chief officer allow these boats to be hanging about? The agent of the company had no right to be standing talking on deck two hours after the ship was timed to sail.

Meanwhile Yolande stole away to her own cabin, and carefully and religiously—and, indeed, with a little choking in the throat—opened the little basket that held the flowers, to see whether they might not be the better for a little sprinkling of water. They were rather expensive flowers for a poor woman to have bought, and the damp moss in which they were imbedded and the basket itself also were more suggestive of Covent Garden than of Whitechapel. Yolande poured some water into the washhand basin, and dipped her fingers into it, and very carefully and tenderly sprinkled the flowers over. And then she considered what was likely to be the coolest and safest place in the cabin for

them, and hung the basket there, and came out again—shutting the door, involuntarily, with quietness.

She passed through the saloon, and went up on deck. Her father was still there.

“Papa,” said she, “you are a very unnatural person. You are starving me.”

“Haven’t you had lunch, Yolande?” said he, with a sudden compunction.

“No, I have not. Do I ever have lunch without you? I am waiting for you.”

“Really, this delay is most atrocious!” he said. “What is the use of advertising one hour and sailing at another? There can be no excuse. The tender has gone ashore.”

“Oh, but, papa, they say there is a lady who missed the train, and is coming down by a special—”

“I don’t believe a word of it. Why, that is worse. The absurdity of keeping a ship like this waiting for an idiot of a woman!”

“I am so hungry, papa!”

“Well, go down below, and get something, if you can. No doubt the gross mismanagement reaches to the saloon tables as well.”

She put her hand within his arm, and half drew him along to the companionway.

“What is the difference of an hour or two.” said she, “if we are to be at sea for a fortnight? Perhaps the poor lady who is coming down by the special train has some one ill abroad. And—and besides, papa, I am so very, very, very hungry!”

He went down with her to the saloon, and took his place in silence. Yolande sat next to Mrs. Graham, who was very talkative and merry, even though there was no captain in his place to do her honor. Young Archie Leslie was opposite; so was Colonel Graham. They were mostly idling; but Yolande was hungry, and they were all anxious to help her at once, though the silent dusky stewards knew their duties well enough.

By and by, when they were talking about anything or nothing, it occurred to the young Master of Lynn to say,

“I suppose you don’t know that we are off?”

“No! impossible!” was the general cry.

“Oh, but we are, though. Look!”

Mr. Winterbourne quickly got up and went to one of

the ports; there, undoubtedly, were the river-banks slowly, slowly going astern.

He went back to his seat, putting his hand on Yolando's shoulder as he sat down.

"Yolande," said he, "do you know that we are off—really and truly going away from England—altogether quit from its shores?"

His manner had almost instantly changed. His spirits quickly brightened up. He made himself most agreeable to Mrs. Graham; and was humorous in his quiet, half-sardonic way, and was altogether pleased with the appearance and the appointments of the ship. To fancy this great mass of metal moving away like that, and the throbbing of the screw scarcely to be detected!

"You know, my dear Mrs. Graham," he said presently, "this child of mine is a most economical, even a penurious, creature; and I must depend on you to force her to make proper purchases at the different places—all the kinds of things that women-folk prize, don't you know. Lace, now. What is the use of being at Malta if you don't buy lace? And embroideries and things of that kind. She ought to bring back enough of Eastern silks and stuffs to last her a lifetime. And jewelry too—silver suits her very well—she must get plenty of that at Cairo—"

"Oh, you can leave that to my wife," Colonel Graham said, confidently. "She'd buy up the Pyramids if she could take them home. I'm glad it won't be my money."

And this was but one small item of expectation. The voyage before them furnished forth endless hopes and schemes. They all adjourned to the hurricane-deck; and here his mood of contented cheerfulness was still more obvious. He was quite delighted with the cleanness and order of the ship, and with the courtesy of the captain, and with the smart look of the officers; and he even expressed approval of the pretty, quiet, not romantic scenery of the estuary of the Thames. Yolande was with him. When they walked, they walked arm in arm. He said he thought the Grahams were likely to be excellent companions; Mrs. Graham was a charming woman; there was a good deal of quiet humor about her husband; The Master of Lynn was a frank-mannered young fellow, with honest eyes. His step grew jaunty. He told Yolande she must, when in Egypt, buy at least half a dozen Eastern costumes; the more gor-

geous the better, so that she should never be at a loss when asked to go to a fancy-dress ball.

And at dinner, too, in the evening, it was a delight to Yolande to sit next to him, and listen to his chuckles and his little jokes. Care seemed to have left him altogether. The night, when they went on deck again, was dark; but a dark night pleased him as much as anything. Yolande was walking with him.

And then they sat down with their friends: and Mrs. Graham had much to talk about. Yolande sat silent. Far away in the darkness a long thin dull line of gold was visible; she had been told that these were the lights of Hastings. It is a strange thing to sail past a country in the night-time and to think of all the beating human hearts it contains—of the griefs, and despairs, and hushed joys all hidden away there in the silence. And perhaps Yolande was thinking most of all of the poor mother—whose name she did not know, whom she should never see again—but whose heart she knew right well was heavy that night with its aching sorrow. It was her first actual contact with human misery, and she could not help thinking of the woman's face. That was terrible, and sad beyond anything that she could have imagined. For indeed her own life so far had been among the roses. As Mrs. Graham had said, she was but a child.

CHAPTER V.

MRS. BELL.

“It is really quite wonderful how intimate you become with people on board ship, and how well you get to know them.”

This not entirely novel observation was addressed to Yolande by the Master of Lynn, while these two, with some half-dozen others, were grouped together in the companion way, where they had taken shelter from the flying seas. The remark was not new, but he appeared to think it important. He seemed anxious to convince her of its truth.

“It is really quite wonderful,” he repeated; and he re-

garded the pretty face as if eager to meet with acquiescence there. "On board ship you get to know the characters of people so thoroughly; you can tell whether the friendship is likely to last after the voyage is over. Balls and dinner parties are of no use; that is only acquaintanceship; at sea you are thrown so much together; you are cut off from the world, you know; there is a kind of fellow-feeling and companionship—that—that is quite different. Why," said he, with his eyes brightening, "it seems absurd to think that the day before yesterday you and I were absolute strangers, and yet here you have been letting me bore you for hours by talking of Lynn and the people there—"

"Oh, I assure you I am very grateful," said Yolande, with much sincerity. "But for you I should have been quite alone."

The fact is, they had encountered a heavy two days' gale outside the Bay of Biscay and south of that; and as the ship was a pretty bad roller, sad havoc was wrought among the passengers. Mrs. Graham had disappeared from the outset. Her husband was occasionally visible; but he was a heavy man, and did not *like* being knocked about, so he remained mostly in the saloon. Mr. Winterbourne was a good enough sailor, but the noises at night—he had a spar-deck cabin—kept him awake, and he spent the best part of the daytime in his berth trying to get fitful snatches of sleep. Accordingly, Yolande, who wanted to see the sights of the storm, betook herself to the companionway, where she would have been entirely among strangers (being somewhat reserved in her walk and conversation) had it not been for Mr. Leslie. He, indeed, proved himself to be a most agreeable companion—modest, assiduously attentive, good-natured, and talkative, and very respectful. He was entirely governed by her wishes. He brought her the news of the ship, when it was not every one who would venture along the deck, dodging the heavy seas. He got her the best corner in this companionway, and the most comfortable of the chairs; and he had rugs for her, and a book, only that she was too far much interested in what was going on around her to read. Once or twice, when she would stand by the door, he even ventured to put his hand on her arm, afraid lest she should be overbalanced and thrown out on the swimming decks. For there was a kind of excitement amid this roar and crash of wind and water. Who could decide which was the grander spectacle—that

great mass of driven and tossing and seething silver that went out and out until it met a wall of black cloud at the horizon, or the view from the other side of the vessel (with one's back to the sunlight)—the mountains of blue rolling by, and their crests so torn by the gale that the foam ended in a rainbow flourish of orange and red?

"They say she is rolling eighty-four degrees 'out and out,'" said Archie Leslie.

"Oh, indeed," said Yolande, looking grave. "But I don't know what that means."

"Neither do I," said he; "but it sounds well. What I do know is that you won't see my sister till we get to Gib. You seem to be a capital sailor, Miss Winterbourne."

"I have often had to be ashamed of it," said Yolande. "To-day, also—there was no other lady at the table—oh, I cannot sit alone like that any more; no, I will rather have no dinner than go and sit alone; it is terrible—and the captain laughing."

"Poor fellow, he is not in a laughing mood just now."

"Why, then? There is no danger?"

"Oh no. But I hear he has had his head cut open—a chronometer falling on him in his cabin. But I think he'll show up at dinner; it is only a flesh wound. They've had one of the boats stove in, they say, and some casks carried away, and a good deal of smashing forward. I wonder if your father has got any sleep—I should think not. I'll go and see how he is getting on if you like?"

"Oh no; if he is asleep, that is very well. No," said Yolande; "I wish you to tell me more about your friend—the gentleman who was your tutor. That is a very strange life for any one to live."

What she wished was enough for him.

"I have not told you the strangest part of the story," said he, "for you would not believe it."

"Am I so unbelieving?" she said, looking up.

His eyes met hers—but only for an instant. Yolande's eyes were calm, smiling, unconcerned; it was not in them, at all events, that any confusion lay.

"Of course I do not mean that," said he; "but—but one has one's character for veracity, don't you know—and if I were to tell you about Mrs. Bell—the story is too improbable."

"Then it is about Mrs. Bell that I wish to hear," said Yolande, in her gentle, imperious way.

"Besides, I've bored you all day long about those people in Inverness-shire. You will think I have never seen any one else, and never been anywhere else. Now I would much rather hear about the Chateau and the people there. I want you to tell me what you thought of America—after living in that quiet place."

"What I thought of America!" said Yolande, with a laugh. "That is a question indeed!"

"Isn't it the question that all Americans ask of you? You have heard enough about the Inverness-shire people. Tell me about Rennes. Have you seen much of Paris? Did you like the Parisians?"

"Ah," said she, "you are not so obedient to me as my papa is."

"Fathers in Scotland are made of sterner stuff, I should think," he answered. "We don't talk that way."

"Now listen," she said. "I have the picture before me—everything complete—the lake, and Lynn Towers, the mountains and moorland, also the ravines where the deer take shelter—oh yes, I can see all that quite clear, but the central figure, that is absent."

"The central figure?"

"Mrs. Bell."

He had quite forgotten about that lady, now he laughed.

"Oh no," he said; "Mrs. Bell is not so important as that. She has nothing to do with Lynn. She lives at Gress."

"Well, that is a beginning at all events," she remarked, with a slight shrug of the shoulders.

"Oh, but must I really tell you the story? You will try hard to believe?"

"I am not unbelieving."

"Very well, then. I will tell you about Mrs. Bell, for I hope some day you will see her."

She looked up inquiringly.

"Yes, I am going to ask your father to take a moor up there that I know of, and of course you would come to the lodge. If he cares about grouse-shooting and isn't afraid of hard work, it is the very place for him. Then you would see my friend Melville, who ought to be Meville of Monaglen by rights, and maybe he will before Mrs. Bell has done with him."

"Mrs. Bell again! Then I am to hear about her after all?"

"Very well, then. Mrs. Bell is not Mrs. Bell, but Miss Bell; only they call her 'Mrs.' because she is an elderly lady, and is rich, and is a substantial and matronly-looking kind of person. Of course you won't believe the story, but never mind. Mrs. Bell was cook to the Melvilles—that was years and years ago, before old Mr. Melville died. But she was an ambitious party, and Gress wasn't enough for her. She could read, and it isn't every Highland servant lass who can do that. She read cookery books and made experiments. Now you see the adventures of Mrs. Bell don't make a heroic story."

"But I am listening," said Yolande, with a calm air.

"She got to be rather clever, though there was not much chance for her in the Melvilles' house. Then she went to Edinburgh. All this is plain sailing. She got a situation in a hotel there; then she was allowed to try what she could do in the cooking line; then she was made head cook. That is the end of chapter one; and I suppose you believe me so far. Years went on, and Kirsty was earning a good wage; and all that we knew of her was that she used to send small sums of money occasionally to help one or two of the poor people in Gress who had been her neighbors, for she had neither kith nor kin of her own. Then there happened to come to the hotel in Edinburgh an elderly English gentleman who was travelling about for his health, and he was frightfully anxious about his food, and he very much appreciated the cooking at the hotel. He made inquiries. He saw Kirsty, who was by this time a respectable middle-aged woman, getting rather gray. What does the old maniac do but tell her that he has only a few years to live; that the cooking of his food is about the most important thing to him in the world; that he has no near relatives to inherit his property; and that if she will go to Leicestershire and bind herself to remain cook in his house as long as he lived, he will undertake to leave her every penny he possessed when he died. 'I will,' says Kirsty, but she was a wise woman, and she went to the lawyers; and had everything properly settled. Shall I go on, Miss Winterbourne? I don't think my heroine interests you. I wish you could see old Mrs. Bell."

"Oh yes, go on. That is not so unbelievable. Of course I believe you. Is it necessary to say that?"

Yolande's dignity was a little bit disturbed at this mo-

ment by a scattering of spray around her; but she quickly dried her red-gold hair and the smooth oval of her cheeks.

“What comes after is a good bit stranger,” he continued. “The old gentleman died; only he lived much longer than anybody expected; and Kirsty, at the age of fifty-eight or so, found herself in possession of an income of very near £4000 a year—well, I believe it is more than that now, for the property has increased in value. And now begins what I can’t tell you half well enough—I wish you could hear Mrs. Bell’s own account—I mean of the schemes that people laid to inveigle her into a marriage. You know she is rather a simple and kindly hearted woman; but she believes herself to be the very incarnation of shrewdness; and certainly on that one point she showed herself shrewd enough. When my sister re-appears on deck again, you say to her, ‘Kirsty kenned better,’ and see if she does not recognize the phrase. Mrs. Bell’s description of the various offers of marriage she has had beats anything; but it was always ‘Kirsty kenned better.’ Yes; and among these was a formal proposal from Lord——; I mean the father of the present Lord——; and that proposal was twice repeated. You know the——s are awfully poor; and that one was at his wit’s end for money. But Kirsty was not to be caught. Among other things he stipulated that he was to be allowed to spend eight months of the year in London, she remaining either in Leicestershire or in the Highlands, as she pleased. More than that, he even got the duke of——to write to Miss Bell, and back up the suit, and promise that, if she would consent, he would himself go down and give her away.”

“The great Duke of——?” said Yolande, with her eyes a little bit wider.

“Yes; the late Duke. I thought I should astonish you. But I have seen the Duke’s letter; it is one of Mrs. Bell’s proudest possessions. I have no doubt you will see it for yourself some day. But Kirsty kenned better.”

“What did she do then?”

“What did she do? She went back to Gress like a sensible woman. And she is more than sensible—she is remarkably good-natured; and she sought out the son of her old master—that’s my friend Melville, you know, and then she tried all her flattery and shrewdness on him until she got him persuaded that he should live in Gress—he was cadging about for another tutorship at the time—and make a sort of model village of it, and have old Kirsty for his housekeeper.

Oh, she's clever enough in her way. She has picked up very good manners; she can hold her own with anybody. And she manages Melville most beautifully; and he isn't easy to manage. She is always very respectful, and makes him believe he is doing her a great kindness in spending her money in improving the village, and all that; but what she really means, of course, is that he should be a kind of small laird in the place that used to belong to his people. And that is what that woman means to do; I know it—I am certain of it. If ever Monaglen comes into the market she'll snap it up; she must have a heap saved. Sooner or later she'll make Jack Melville 'Melville of Monaglen,' as sure as he's alive."

"You and he are great friends, then?"

"Oh, he rather sits upon me," the Master of Lynn said, modestly; "but we are pretty good friends, as things go."

The gale did not abate much that afternoon; on the contrary, the great ship seemed to be rolling more heavily than ever; and at one minute a little accident occurred that might have been attended with more serious consequences. Mr. Winterbourne and young Leslie, not being able to reach the smoking-room on account of the seas coming over the bows, had sought shelter on a bench immediately aft of the hurricane-deck, and there, enveloped in waterproof, they were trying to keep their cigars alight. Unfortunately the lashings securing this bench had not been very strong, and at one bad lurch of the vessel—indeed, the deck seemed to be at right angles with the water below them—away the whole thing went, spinning down to leeward. Leslie was a smart young fellow, saw what was coming, and before the bench had reached the gunwale he had with one hand swung himself on to the ladder ascending to the hurricane-deck, while with the other he had seized hold of his companion's coat. Probably, had he not been so quick; the worst that could have happened was that the two of them might have had a thorough sousing in the water surging along the scuppers; but when Yolande heard of the accident, and when Mr. Winterbourne rather sadly showed her his waterproof, which had been half torn from his back, she was instantly convinced that young Leslie had saved her father's life.

In consequence she was much less imperious and wilful in her manner all that afternoon, and was even timidly polite to him. She consented, without a word, to go down

to dinner, although again she was the only lady at table. And, indeed, dinner that evening was entirely a ludicrous performance. When Mr. Winterbourne and Yolande and young Leslie got to the foot of the companion-stairs, and with much clinging prepared to enter the saloon, the first thing they saw before them was a sudden wave of white that left the table and crashed against the walls. The stewards regarded the broken crockery with a ghastly smile, but made no immediate effort to pick up the fragments. The "fiddles" on the table were found to be of no use whatever. When these three sat down they could only make sure of such things as they could keep their fingers upon. Buttressing was of no avail. Plates, tumblers, knives and forks, broke away and steeple-chased over the fiddles, until the final smash on the walls brought their career to a close. The din was awful; and Mr. Winterbourne was much too anxious about the objects around him to be able to make his customary little jokes. But they got through it somehow; and the only result of these wild adventures with rocketing loaves and plates and bottles was that Yolande and the young Master of Lynn seemed to be on more and more friendly and familiar terms. Yolande talked to him as frankly as if he had been her brother.

Next day matters mended considerably; and the next again broke blue and fair and shining, with an immense number of Mother Cary's chickens skimming along the sunlit waters. Far away in the south the pale line of the African coast was visible. People began to appear on deck who had been hidden for the last couple of days; Mrs. Graham was up and smiling, in a exceedingly pretty costume. When should they reach Gibraltar? Who was going ashore? Were there many "Scorpions" on board?

Yolande was not much of a politician; but her father being somewhat of a "Jingo," of course she was a "Jingo" too; and she was very proud when, towards the afternoon, they drew nearer and nearer to the great gray scarred rock that commands the Mediterranean; and her heart warmed at the sight of a little red speck on one of the ramparts—an English sentry keeping guard there. And when they went ashore, and wandered through the streets, she had as much interest in plain Tommy Atkins in his red coat as in any of the more picturesquely clad Spaniards or Arabs she saw there; and when they went into the Alameda to hear the military band play, she knew by a sort of instinct that

among the ladies sitting in their cool costumes under the maples and acacias such and such groups were English-women—the wives of the officers, no doubt—and she would have liked to have gone and spoken to them. “Gib.” seemed to her to be a bit of England, and therefore friendly and familiar; she thought the place looked tremendously strong; and she was glad to see such piles of shot and ranged rows of cannon; and she had a sort of gratitude in her heart toward the officers and the garrison, and even the English-women sitting there, with a tint of sun-brown on their cheeks, but an English look in their eyes. And all this was absurd enough in a young minx who made a fool of English idioms nearly every time she opened her mouth!

What a beautiful night that was as they sailed away from the vast Gray Rock! The moon was growing in strength now, and the heavens were clear. The passengers had begun to form their own little groups; acquaintance-ships had been made; chair drawn close together on the deck, in the silence, under the stars. And down there the skylight of the saloon was open, and there was a yellow glare coming up from below, also the sound of singing. There were at duets below—two or three young people; and whether they sang well or ill, the effect was pleasant enough, with the soft murmur of the Mediterranean all around. “Oh, who will o’er the downs so free”—of course they sang that; people always do sing that on board ship. Then they sang, “I would that my love could silently,” and many another old familiar air, the while the vessel churned on its way through the unseen waters, and the pale shadows thrown by the moon on the white decks slowly moved with the motion of the vessel. It was a beautiful night.

The Master of Lynn came aft from the smoking-room, and met his brother-in-law on the way.

“This is better, isn’t it?” said Colonel Graham. “This is more like what I shipped for.”

“Yes, this is better. Do you know where the Winter-bournes are?”

“In the saloon, I have just left them there.”

Young Leslie was passing on, but he stopped.

“I say, Graham, I’ve noticed one thing on board this ship already.”

“What?”

“You watch to-morrow, if they’re both on deck at the

same time. You'll find that Polly has got all the men about her, and Miss Winterbourne all the children. Odd, isn't it?"

CHAPTER VI.

THEY were indeed cut off from the rest of the world, as they went ploughing their way through these blue Mediterranean seas. Day after day brought its round of amusements; and always the sun shining on the white decks; and the soft winds blowing; and now and again a swallow, or dove, or quail, or some such herald from unknown coasts, taking refuge for awhile in the rigging, or fluttering along by the vessel's side. There was an amateur photographer on board, moreover; and many were the groups that were formed and taken; only it was observed that when the officers were included, the captain generally managed to have Yolande standing on the bridge beside him—a piece of favoritism that broke through all rules and regulations. There was a good deal of "Bull" played; and it was wonderful how, when Mrs. Graham was playing, there always happened to be a number of those young Highland officers about, ready to pick up her quoits for her. And always, but especially on the bright and breezy forenoons, there was the constitutional tramp up and down the long hurricane-deck—an occupation of which Yolande was particularly fond, and in which she found no one could keep up with her so untiringly as the Master of Lynn. She was just as well pleased, however, when she was alone, for then she sank to herself, and had greater freedom in flinging her arms about.

"Look at her," her father said one morning to Mrs. Graham—concealing his admiration under an air of chagrin. "Wouldn't you think she was an octopus, or a windmill, or something like that?"

"I call it a rattling good style of walking," said Colonel Graham, interposing. "Elbows in; palms out. She is a remarkably well-made young woman—that's my opinion."

"But she isn't an octopus," her father said, peevishly.

"Oh, that is merely an excess of vitality," her champion

said. "Look how springy her walk is! I don't believe her heel ever touches the deck—all her walking is done with the front part of her foot. Gad, it's infectious," continued the colonel, with a grim laugh. "I caught myself trying it when I was walking with her yesterday. But it ain't easy at fifteen stone."

"She need not make herself ridiculous," her father said.

"Ridiculous? I think it's jolly to look at her. Makes one feel young again. She don't know that a lot of fogies are watching her. Bet a sovereign she's talking about dancing. Archie's devilish fond of dancing—so he ought to be at his time of life. They say they're going to give us a ball to-night—on deck."

Mrs. Graham was a trifle impatient. There were none of the young officers about, for a wonder; they had gone to have their after-breakfast cigar in the smoking-room—and perhaps a little game of Nap therewithal. This study of Yolande's appearance had lasted long enough, in her opinion.

"It is clever of her to wear nothing on her head," she said, as she took up a book and arranged herself in her chair. "Her hair is her best feature."

But what Yolande and her companion, young Leslie, were talking about, as they marched up and down the long white decks—occasionally stopping to listen to a small group of lascars, who were chanting a monotonous singsong refrain—had nothing in the world to do with dancing.

"You think, then, I ought to speak to your father about the moor? Would you like it?" said he.

"I?" she said. "That is nothing. If my papa and I are together, it is not any difference to me where we are. But if it is so wild and remote, that is what my papa will like."

"Remote!" said he, with a laugh. "It is fourteen miles away from anywhere. I like to hear those idiots talking who say the Highlands are overrun with tourists. Much they know about the Highlands! Well, now they've got the railway to Oban, I suppose that's pretty bad. But this place that I am telling you of—why, you would not see a strange face from one year's end to the other."

"Oh, that will exactly suit my papa—exactly," she said, with a smile. "Is it very, *very* far away from everything and every one?"

"Isn't it?" he said, grimly. "Why, it's up near the sky, to begin with. I should say the average would be near three thousand feet above the level of the sea. And as for remoteness—well, perhaps Kingussie is not more than twelve miles off as the crow flies; but then you've got the Monalea mountains between it and you; and the Monalea mountains are not exactly the sort of place that a couple of old ladies would like to climb in search of wild flowers. You see that is the serious part of it for you, Miss Winterbourne. Fancy the change between the temperature of the Nile and that high moorland—"

"Oh, that is nothing," she said. "So long as I am out of doors the heat or the cold is to me nothing—nothing at all."

"The other change," he continued, "I have no doubt would be striking enough—from the busy population of Egypt to the solitude of Allt-nam-Ba—"

"What is it? Allt—"

"Allt-nam-Ba. It means the Stream of the Cows, though there are no cows there now. They have some strange names up there—left by the people who have gone away. I suppose people did live there once, though what they lived on I can't imagine. They have left names, anyway, some of them simple enough—the Fair Winding Water, the Dun Water, the Glen of the Horses, the Glen of the Gray Loch, and so forth—but some of them I can't make out at all. One is the Glen of the Tombstone, and I have searched it, and never could find any trace of a tombstone. One is the Cairn of the Wanderers, and they must have wandered a good bit before they got up there. Then there is a burn that is called the Stream of the Fairies—*Uisge nan Sithena*—that is simple enough; but there is another place that is called Black Fairies. Now who on earth ever heard of black fairies?"

"But it is not a frightful place?" she said. "It is not terrible, gloomy?"

"Not a bit," said he. "These are only names. No one knows how they came there, that is all. Gloomy? I think the strath from the foot of the moor down to our place is one of the prettiest straths in Scotland."

"Then I should see Lynn Tower?" she said.

"Oh yes; it isn't much of a building, you know."

"And Mr. Melville of Monaglen—that would be interesting to me."

"Oh yes," said he: "but—but I wouldn't call him Monaglen—do you see—he hasn't got Monaglen; perhaps he may have it back some day."

"And you," she said, turning her clear eyes toward him, "sometimes they call you Master; is it right?"

He laughed lightly.

"Oh, that is a formal title—in Scotland. Colonel Graham makes a little joke of it; I suppose that is what you have heard."

"I must not call you so?"

"Oh no." And then he said, with a laugh: "You may call me anything you like; what's the odds? If you want to please my brother-in-law you should call him Inverstroy."

"But how can I remember?" she said, holding up her fingers and counting. "Not Monaglen; not Master; but yes, Investroy. And Mrs. Bell, shall I see her?"

"Certainly, if you go there."

"And the mill-wheels, and the electric lamps, and all the strange things?"

"Oh yes, if Jack Melville takes a fancy to you. He doesn't to everybody."

"Oh, I am not anxious," she said with a little dignity. "I do not care much about such things. It is no matter to me."

"I beg your pardon a thousand times!" he said, with much earnestness, "Really, I was not thinking of what I was saying. I was thinking of Jack Melville's ways. Of course he'll be delighted to show you everything—he will be perfectly delighted. He is awfully courteous to strangers. He will be quite delighted to show you the whole of his instruments and apparatus."

"It is very obliging," she said, with something of coldness, "but there is no need that I shall be indebted to Mr. Melville."

"*Not* of Monaglen," he said, demurely.

"Of Monaglen, or not of Monaglen," she said, with high indifference. "Come, shall we go and find my papa, and tell him about the wild, far place, and the Stream of the Fairies?"

"No, wait a moment, Miss Winterbourne," said he, with a touch of embarrassment. "You see, that shooting belongs to my father. And I look after the letting of our shootings and fishings when I am at home, though of course

we have an agent. Now—now I don't quite like taking advantage of a new friendship to—to make such a suggestion. I mean I would rather sink the shop. Perhaps your father might get some other shooting up there."

"But not with the Glen of the Black Fairies, and the strath, and Lynn Towers near the loch where the char are, and all that you have told me. No; if I am not to see Mrs. Bell—if I am not to see—" She was going to say Mr. Melville of Monaglen, but she waved that aside with a gesture of petulance. "No, I wish to see all that you have told me about, and I think it would be pleasant if we were neighbors."

"You really must have neighbors," said he, eagerly, "in a place like that. That is one thing certain. I am sure we should try to make it as pleasant for you as possible. I am sure my father would. And Polly would be up sometimes—I mean Mrs. Graham. Oh, I assure you, if it was any other shooting than Allt-nam-Ba I should be very anxious that you and your father should come and take it. Of course the lodge is not a grand place."

"We will go and talk about it now," she said, "to my papa, and you can explain."

Now, as it turned out, although Mr. Winterburne was rather staggered at first by Yolande's wild project of suddenly changing the idle luxuries of a Nile voyage for the severities of a moorland home in the North, there was something in the notion that attracted him. He began to make inquiries. The solitariness, the remoteness, of the place seemed to strike him. Then 850 brace of grouse, a few black game, a large number of mountain hares, and six stags was a good return for nine weeks' shooting; and the last tenant had not had experts with him. Could Yolande have a piano or a harmonium sent to her away in that wilderness?—anything to break the silence of the moors. And Mr. Winterbourne was unlike most people who are contemplating the renting of a moor; the cost of it was the point about which he thought least. But to be away up there—with Yolande.

"Of course it is just possible that the place may have been let since I left," the Master of Lynn said. "We have not had it vacant for many years back. But that could easily be ascertained at Malta by telegram."

"You think you would like the place, Yolande?" her father said.



"I think so; yes."

"You would not die of cold?"

"Not willingly, papa—I mean I would try not—I am not afraid. You must go somewhere, papa; there is no Parliament there; you are fond of shooting; and there will be many days, not with shooting, for you and me to wander in the mountains. I think that will be nice."

"Very well. I will take the place, Mr. Leslie, if it is still vacant; and I hope we shall be good neighbors; and if you can send us a deer or two occasionally into the ravines you speak of, we shall be much obliged to you. And now about dogs, and gillies, and ponies."

But this proved to be an endless subject of talk between these two, both then and thereafter; and so Yolande stole away to look after her own affairs. Amongst other things she got hold of the purser, and talked so coaxingly to him that he went and ordered the cook to make two sheets of toffee instead of one, and all of white sugar; so that when Yolande subsequently held her afternoon levee among the children of the steerage passengers she was provided with sweetstuff enough to make the hearts of the mothers quake with fear.

It was that evening that she had to put the flowers overboard—on the wide and sad and uncertain grave. She did not wish any one to see her, somehow; she could not make it a public ceremony—this compliance with the pathetic, futile wishes of the poor mother. She had most carefully kept the flowers sprinkled with water, and despite of that they had got sadly faded and shrivelled; but she had purchased another basketful at Malta, and these were fresh enough. What mattered? The time was too vague; the vessel's course too uncertain; the trifles of flowers would soon be swallowed up in the solitary sea. But it was the remembrance of the mother she was thinking of.

She chose a moment when every one was down below at dinner, and the deck was quite deserted. She took the two little baskets to the rail; and there, very slowly and reverently, she took out handful after handful of the flowers and dropped them down on the waves, and watched them go floating and floating out and out on the swaying waters. The tears were running down her face; but she had forgotten whether there was anybody by or not. She was thinking of the poor woman in England. Would she know?

Could she see? Was she sure that her request would not be forgotten? And indeed she had not gone so far wrong when she had trusted to the look of Yolande's face.

Then, fearing her absence might be noticed, she went quickly to her cabin, bathed her eyes in cold water, and then went below—where she found the little coterie at their end of the table all much exercised about Mr. Winterbourne's proposal to spend the autumn among the wild solitudes of Allt-nam-Ba. He, indeed, declared he had nothing to do with it. It was Yolande's doing. He had never heard of Allt-nam-Ba.

"It is one of the best grouse moors in Scotland, I admit that," Colonel Graham said, with an ominous smile; "but it is a pretty stiffish place to work over."

"You talk like that, Jim," said his wife (who seemed anxious that the Winterbournes should preserve their fancy for the place), "because you are getting too stout for hill work. We shall find you on a pony soon. I should like to see you shooting from the back of a pony."

"Better men than I have done that," said Inverstry, good-humoredly.

They had a concert that night—not a ball, as was at first intended; and there was a large assemblage, even the young gentlemen of the smoking-room having forsaken their Nap when they heard that Mrs. Graham was going to sing. And very well she sang, too, with a thoroughly trained voice of very considerable compass. She sang all the new society songs, about wild melancholics and regrets and things of that kind; but her voice was really fine in quality; and one almost believed for the moment that the pathos of these spasmodic things was true. And then her dress—how beautifully it fitted her neat little shoulders and waist! Her curly short hair was surmounted by a coquetish cap; she had a circle of diamonds set in silver round her neck; but there were no rings to mar the symmetry of her plump and pretty white hands. And how assiduous those boy-officers were, although deprived of their cigars! They hung round the piano; they turned over the music for her—as well as an eyeglass permitted them to see; nay, when she asked, one of them sent for a banjo, and performed a solo on that instrument—performing it very well too. None of the unmarried girls had the ghost of a chance. Poor Yolande, in her plain pale pink gown, was nowhere. All eyes were directed on the pretty little figure at the

piano; on the stylish costume; the charming profile, with its outward sweep of black lashes; on the graceful arms and white fingers. For a smile from those clear dark gray eyes there was not one of the tall youths standing there who would not have sworn to abjure sporting newspapers for the rest of his natural life.

There was only one drawback to the concert, as a concert. To keep the saloon cool the large ports astern had been opened, and the noise of the water rushing away from the screw was apt to drown the music.

"Miss Winterbourne," some one said to Yolande—and she started, for she had been sitting at one of the tables, imagining herself alone, and dreaming about the music—"one can hear far better on deck. Won't you come up and try?"

It was the Master of Lynn.

"Oh yes," said she; "thank you."

She went with him on deck, expecting to find her father there. But Mr. Winterbourne had gone to the smoking-room. What mattered? All companions are alike on board ship. Young Leslie brought her a chair, and put it close to the skylight of the saloon, and he sat down there too. They could hear pretty well, and they could talk in the intervals. The night was beautifully quiet, and the moonlight whiter than ever on the decks. These Southern nights were soft and fitted for music; they seemed to blend the singing below and the gentle rushing of the sea all around. And Yolande was so friendly—and frank to plain spokenness. Once or twice she laughed; it was a low, quiet, pretty laugh.

Such were the perils of the deep that lay around them as they sailed along those Southern seas. And at last they were nearing Malta. On the night before they expected to reach the island Mrs. Graham took occasion to have a quiet chat with her brother.

"Look here, Archie, we shall all be going ashore to-morrow, I suppose," said she.

"No doubt."

"And I dare say," she added, fixing her clear, pretty, shrewd eyes on him, "that you will be going away to the club with those young fellows, and we shall see nothing of you."

"We shall be all over the place, I suppose," he answered.

‘Most likely I shall lunch at the club. Graham can put me down; he is still a member, isn’t he?’

“It would be a good deal more sensible like,” said his sister, “if you gave us lunch at a hotel.”

“I?” he cried, with a laugh. “I like that! Considering my income and Inverstroy’s income, a proposal of that kind strikes one with a sort of coolness—”

“I didn’t mean Jim and me only,” said Mrs. Graham, sharply. “Jim can pay for his own luncheon, and mine too. Why don’t you ask the Winterbournes?”

This was a new notion altogether.

“They wouldn’t come, would they?” he said, diffidently. “It is not a very long acquaintance. Still, they seem so friendly, and I’d like it awfully, if you think you could get Miss Winterbourne to go with you. Do you think you could, Polly? Don’t you see, we ought to pay them a compliment—they’ve taken Allt-nam-Ba.”

“Miss Winterbourne,” said Mrs. Graham, distantly, “is going ashore with me to morrow. Of course we must have lunch somewhere. If you men like to go to the club, very well I suppose we shall manage.”

Well perhaps it was only a natural thing to suggest. The Winterbournes had been kind to him. Moreover, women do not like to be left to walk up and down the Strada Reale by themselves when they know that their husbands and brothers are enjoying themselves in the Union Club. But it is probable that neither Mrs. Graham nor the young Master of Lynn quite fully recollected that attentions and civilities which are simple and customary on board ship—which are a necessity of the case (people consenting to become intimate and familiar through being constantly thrown together)—may, on land, where one returns to the conventionalities of existence, suddenly assume a very different complexion, and may even appear to have a startling significance.

CHAPTER VII.

A DAY ASHORE.

MOST "landward" people, to use the Scotch phrase, would imagine that on board ship ladies would be content with any rough-and-tumble costume that would serve all purposes from morning till night. But on a long voyage the very reverse is the case. Nowhere else do women dress with more elaborate nicety, and with such studied exhibition of variety as their tolerably capacious wardrobes permit. For one thing, they have no more engrossing occupation. They can spend hours in their cabin devising new combinations; and as many of them are going to live abroad, they have with them all their worldly gear from which to pick and choose. It is a break in the monotony of the day to have one dress at breakfast, another for forenoon games and lunch, another for the afternoon promenade, another for the meal of state in the evening. Then nowhere else are well-made costumes seen to such advantage; the deck is a wide stage, and there is the best of light for colors. Moreover, in a woman's eyes it is worth while to take trouble about dressing well on board ship; for it is no fleeting glance that rewards her pains. The mere change of a brooch at the neck is noticed.

But all the innocent little displays that had been made during the long voyage were as nothing on board this ship to the grand transfiguration that took place in view of the landing at Malta. The great vessel was now lying silent and still, her screw no longer throbbing, and instead of the wide, monotonous circle of water around her, here were blue arms of the sea running into the gray-green island; and great yellow bastions along the shore; and over these again a pale white and pink town straggling along the low-lying hills. After breakfast the men-folk were left in undisturbed possession of the deck. *They* were not anxious about their costume—at least the middle-aged ones were not. They smoked their cigars, and leaned over the rail, and watched the swarm of gayly painted boats that were vying to take them ashore. And perhaps some of them

were beginning to wish that the women would look alive; for already the huge barges filled with coal were drawing near, and soon the vessel would be enveloped in clouds of dust.

Then the women began to come up, one by one; but all transformed! They were scarcely recognizable by mere acquaintances. There was about them the look of a Sunday afternoon in Kensington Gardens; and it was strange enough on the deck of a ship. People who had been on sufficiently friendly terms now grew a little more reserved; these land costumes reminded them that on shore they might have less claim to a free and easy companionship. And Mr. Winterbourne grew anxious. Did Yolande know? The maid she had brought with her, and whose services she had agreed to share with Mrs. Graham, had been useless enough from the moment she put foot on board the ship; but surely she must have learned what was going forward? Perhaps Yolande would appear in her ordinary pale pink morning dress? She was far too content with simplicity in costume. Again and again he had had to rebuke her.

"Why don't you have more dresses?" he had said to her on board this very ship. "Look at Mrs. Graham. Why don't you have as many dresses as Mrs. Graham? A married lady? What difference does that make? I like to see you prettily dressed. When I want you to save money, I will tell you. You can't get them at sea? Well, of course not; but you might have got them on shore. And if it meant more trunks, what is the use of Jane?"

He was a nervous and fidgety man, and he was beginning to be really concerned about Yolande's appearance, when he caught a glimpse of Yolande herself coming out on to the deck from the companionway. He was instantly satisfied. There was nothing striking about her dress, it is true—the skirt and sleeves were of dark blue velvet, the rest of dark blue linen, and she wore her white silver belt—but at all events it was different; and then the flat dark blue Scotch cap looked pretty enough on her ruddy golden hair. Indeed, he need not have been afraid that Yolande would have appeared insignificant anyhow or anywhere. Her tall stature; her slender and graceful figure; her air and carriage—all these rendered her quite sufficiently distinguished-looking, even when one was not near enough to know anything of the fascination of her eyes and the pretty pathetic mouth.

And yet he was so anxious that she should acquit herself well—he was so proud of her—that he went to her quickly and said,—

“That is one of the prettiest of your dresses, Yolande—very pretty—and it suits your silver girdle very well; but the Scotch cap—well, that suits you too, you know—”

“It is Mrs. Graham’s, papa. She asked me to wear it—in honor of Allt-nam-Ba.”

“Yes, yes,” he said. “That is all very well—at Allt-nam-Ba. It is very pretty—and Jane has done your hair very nicely this morning—”

“I have not had a glimpse of Jane this morning,” Yolande said with a laugh. “Could I be so cruel? No. Mrs. Graham going ashore, and I to take Jane away—how could I?”

“I don’t like the arrangement,” her father said, with a frown. “Why should you not have the help of your own maid? But about the cap, Yolande—look, these other ladies are dressed as if they were going to church. The cap would be very pretty at a garden party—at lawn tennis—but I think—”

“Oh, yes I will put on a bonnet,” said Yolande, instantly. “It is not to please Mrs. Graham, it is to please you, that I care for, One minute—”

But who was this who intercepted her? Not the lazy young fellow who used to lounge about the decks in a shooting coat, with a cigarette scarcely ever absent from his finger or lips; but a most elegant young gentleman in tall hat and frock-coat, who was dressed with the most remarkable precision, from his collar and stiff necktie to his snow-white gaiters and patent leather boots

“Are you ready to go ashore, Miss Winterbourne?” said he, smoothing his gloves the while. “My sister is just coming up.”

“In one minute,” said she: “I am going for a bonnet instead of my Scotch cap—”

“Oh, no,” he said, quickly; “please don’t. Please wear the cap. You have no idea how well it becomes you. And it would be so kind of you to pay a compliment to the Highlands—I think half the officers on board belong to the Seaforth Highlanders—and if we go to look at the club—”

“No, thank you,” she said, passing him with a friendly smile. “I am not going *en vivandiere*. Perhaps I will borrow the cap some other time—at Allt-nam-Ba.”

Mr. Winterbourne overheard this little conversation—in fact, the three of them were almost standing together; and whether it was that the general excitement throughout the vessel had also affected him, or whether it was that the mere sight of all these people in different costumes had made him suddenly conscious of what were their real relations, not their ship relations—it certainly startled him to hear the young Master of Lynn, apparently on the same familiar footing as himself, advise Yolande as to what became her. The next step was inevitable. He was easily alarmed. He recalled his friend Shortlands's remark—which he had rather resented at the time—that a P. and O. voyage would marry off anybody who wanted to get married. He thought of Yolande; and he was stricken dumb with a nameless fear. Was she going away from him? Was some one else about to supplant him in her affections? These two had been in a very literal sense all the world to each other. They had been constant companions. They knew few people; for he lived in a lonely, nomadic kind of way; and Yolande never seemed to care for any society but his own. And now was she going away from him?"

Then it suddenly occurred to him that he had just arranged to take her away into those wild solitudes in the Highlands, where the Leslies would be their only neighbors. It seemed more and more inevitable. But why not? Why should not this happen? He nerved himself to face the worst. Yolande must marry some day. He had declared to John Shortlands that he almost wished she would marry now. And how could she marry better? This young fellow was of good birth and education; well mannered and modest: altogether unexceptionable, as far as one could judge. And Mr. Winterbourne had been judging, unconsciously to himself. He had observed in the smoking-room and elsewhere that young Leslie was inclined to be cautious about the expenditure of money—at cards or otherwise; but was not that rather a good trait? The family was not wealthy; the present Lord Lynn had been engaged all his life in slowly paying off the mortgages on the family estates; and no doubt this young fellow had been economically brought up. And then again—if Yolande were to marry at all—would it not be better that she should be transferred to that distant and safe solitude? Yolande as the mistress of Lynn Towers, far away there in the seclusion of the hills, living a happy and peaceful life, free from scath and

terror; that was a fancy that pleased him. It seemed not so terrible now that Yolande should marry—at least—at least he would face the worst, and strive to look at the pleasanter aspect of it. She would be far away and safe.

These anxious, rapid struggling thoughts had not occupied a couple of minutes. Yolande appeared, and he was almost afraid to regard her. Might there not be something of the future written in her face? Indeed, there was nothing there but a pleasant interest about the going on shore: and when she accepted a little nosegay that the Master of Lynn brought her, and pinned it on her dress, it was with a smile of thanks, but with—to any unconcerned eye—the very frankest indifference.

The Grahams now announced themselves as ready; and the party descended the gangway into the boat—young Leslie preceding them so as to hand Yolande into her place.

“Mr. Winterbourne,” said he, when they were all seated under the awning, and sailing away through the lapping green water, “I hope you and your daughter will come and lunch with us—”

“Oh, yes of course,” said he: did they not make one party?

“But what I mean is this,” said the Master of Lynn; “I am giving those Graham people their lunch—the cormorants!—and Lynn Towers is a long way off; and I haven’t often the chance of playing host; and so I want you and Miss Winterbourne also to be my guests at the——Hotel.”

“Oh, thanks; very well,” said Yolande’s father who had begun now to study this young man with the most observant but cautious scrutiny, and was in a strange kind of way anxious to be pleased with him.

“Why, I thought you were going to the club they were all speaking of,” said Yolande, staring at him. “Captain Douglass told me so.”

“Captain Douglass thinks he knows everything,” said young Leslie, good-naturedly; “whereas he knows nothing except how to play sixpenny loo.”

“But we will all go to the club, Miss Yolande,” said Colonel Graham, “and you shall see the ballroom. Very fine. I don’t know what the high-art fellows nowadays would think of it. I used to think it uncommonly fine in by-gone times. Gad, I’m not so fond of dancing now.”

“You can dance as well as ever you did, Jim, only you’re so lazy,” his wife said, sharply.

“ You’ll have to give them a torehlight dance, Archie,” the colonel continued, “ the first stag Mr. Winterbourne kills. Miss Yolande would like to look at that. And you’re pretty good yourself at the sword dance. I once could do it, in a way—”

“ Jim, I won’t have you talk as if you were an old man,” his wife said, angrily. “ I don’t care about you ; I care about myself. I won’t have you talk like that. Everybody on board thinks I’m forty.”

“ You are not so young as you once were, you know, Polly.”

But Mrs. Graham was much too radiant a coquette to be put out by any impertinent speech like that. She was too sure of herself. She knew what her glass told her—and the half-concealed admiration of a whole shipful of people. She could afford to treat such speeches with contempt. And so they reached the shore.

They refused to have a carriage ; preferring rather to climb away up the steep steps, and away up the steep little streets, until they reached those high and narrow thoroughfares (with their pink and yellow houses and pretty balconies, and green casements) that were so cool and pleasant to wander through. Sometimes the sun, though shut out, sent a reflected light down into these streets in so peculiar a fashion that the pink fronts of the houses looked quite transparent, and not unfrequently, at the far end of the thoroughfare, the vista was closed in by a narrow band of the deepest and intensest blue—the high horizon-line of the distant sea. They went up to St. John’s Bastion to look at the wilderness of geraniums and lotus-trees. They went to St. John’s Church. They went to the telegraph office, where the Master of Lynn sent off this message :—

Archibald Leslie, — Hotel Malta.

Ronald MacPherson, High Street, Inverness.

*Consider Allt-nam-Ba, if unlet, taken by Winterbourne,
M. P. Slagpool, Seven hundred fifty. Reply.*

They went to see the Governor’s Garden, and, in short, all the sights of the place ; but what charmed the women-folks most of all was, naturally, the great ballroom at the Union Club. As they stood in the big, empty, hollow-resounding place, Yolande said :—

“ Oh yes, it is beautiful. It must be cool, with such a

high roof. Papa, have they as fine a ballroom at the Reform Club?"

"The Reform Club?" her father repeated—rather vexed that she should make such a blunder. "Of course not. Who ever heard of such a thing!"

"Why not?" she said. "Every one says this is a good club—and very English. Why not at the Reform Club? Is that why you have never taken me there?"

"Well, it is—it is devilish English looking," said Colonel Graham to his wife as they turned into the long and cool coffee-room, where there were rows of small tables, all nicely furnished out. "I like it. It reminds me of old times. I like to see the fellows in the old uniforms; it makes one's heart warm. Hanged if I don't have a glass of sherry and bitters, just to see if it tastes like the real thing—or a brandy and soda. It's devilish like home. I don't like being waited on by these Lascar-Portuguese-half-nigger fellows. My chap said to me yesterday at breakfast, when I asked for poached eggs, 'No go yet—when go bell me bring.' And another fellow, when I asked for my bath, said, 'Hot water no go—when go hot water, me tell.' By Gad! there's old Monroe—the fellow that nailed the Sepoys at Azimghur—he's got as fat as a turkey-cock—"

Indeed, the members of the club—mostly officers apparently—were now coming in to lunch; and soon Colonel Graham was fairly mobbed by old friends and acquaintances, insomuch that it was with difficulty he was drawn away to the banquet that young Leslie—taking advantage of the stay of the party in St. John's Church—had had prepared for them at the hotel. It was a modest feast, but merry enough; and the table was liberally adorned with flowers, of which there is no lack in Malta. Colonel Graham was much excited with meeting these old friends, and had a great deal to say about them; his wife was glad to have a rest after so much walking. Yolande was naturally interested in the foreign look of the place and the people; and young Leslie, delighted to have the honor of being host, played that part with much tact and modesty and skill.

To Mr. Winterbourne it was strange. Yolande seemed to half belong to these people already. Mrs. Graham appeared to claim her as a sister. On board ship these things were not so noticeable; for of course they met at meals; and the same groups that were formed at table had

a tendency to draw together again on deck or in the saloon. But here was this small party cut off from all the rest of the passengers, and they were entirely on the footing of old friends, and the Master of Lynn's anxiety to please Yolande was most marked and distinct. On board ship it would scarcely have been noticed; here it was obvious to the most careless eye. And yet, when he turned to Yolande herself, who, as might have been imagined, ought to have been conscious that she was being singled out for a very special attention and courtesey, he could read no such consciousness in her face—nothing but a certain pleasant friendliness and indifference.”

After luncheon they went away for a long drive to see more sights, and in the afternoon returned to the hotel, before going on board. Young Leslie was thinking of leaving instructions that the telegram from Inverness should be forwarded on to Cairo, when, fortunately, it arrived. It read curiously:—

*Ronald MacPherson,
Estate and Colliery Agent,
High Street, Inverness.*

*The Honorable the Master of Lynn,
of the P. and O. Company's Steam-ship —,
The — Hotel, Malta.*

Right.

“Now what on earth— Oh, I see!” exclaimed the recipient of this telegram, after starting at it in a bewildered fashion for a moment. “I see. Here is a most beautiful joke. MacPherson has wanted to be clever—has found out that telegraphing to Malta is pretty dear; thinks he will make the message as short as possible, but will take it out in the address. I am certain that is it. He has fancied the address was free, as in England; and he has sent his clerk to the office. Won't the clerk catch it when he goes back and says what he has paid! That is real Highland shrewdness. Never mind; you have got the shooting, Mr. Winterbourne.

“I am glad of that.” said Yolande's father, rather absently; for now, when he thought of the solitudes of Allt-nam-ba, it was not of stags, or grouse, or mountain hares, that he was thinking.

They got on board again, and almost immediately went below to prepare for dinner, for the decks were still dirty

with the coal dust. And that night they were again at sea—far away in the silences; and a small group of them were up at the end of the saloon, practising glees for the next grand concert. Mr. Winterbourne was on deck, walking up and down, alone; and perhaps trying to fancy how it would be with him when he was really left alone, and Yolande entirely away from him, with other cares and occupations. And he was striving to convince himself that that would be best; that he would himself feel happier if Yolande's future in life were secured; if he could see her the contented and proud mistress of Lynn Towers. Here on board this ship, it might seem a hard thing that they should separate, even though the separation were only a mitigated one; but if they were back in England again, he knew those terrible fears would again beset him, and that it would be the first wish of his heart that Yolande should get married. At Lynn Towers he might see her sometimes. It was remote, and quiet, and safe; sometimes Yolande and he would walk together there.

Meanwhile down below they had finished their practicing; and the Master of Lynn was idly turning over a book of glees.

"Polly," said he to his sister, "I like that one as well as any—I mean the words. Don't you think they apply very well to Miss Winterbourne?"

His sister took the book and read Sheridan's lines:

"Marked you her eye of heavenly blue?
Marked you her cheek of roseate hue?
That eye in liquid circles moving;
That cheek abashed at man's approving
The one love's arrows darting round,
The other blushing at the wound.

Well, the music of this glee is charming, and the words are well enough; but when the Master of Lynn ventured the opinion that these were a good description of Yolande, he never made a worse shot in his life. Yolande "abashed at man's approving"? She let no such nonsense get into her head. She was a little too proud for that—or perhaps only careless and indifferent.

CHAPTER VIII.

RECONNAISSANCES.

"I DON'T believe in any such simplicity. Men may women don't. It seems to me more the simplicity of an accomplished flirt."

The speaker was Mrs. Graham, and she spoke with an air of resentment.

"You don't know her," said the Master of Lynn, with involuntary admiration.

"I suppose you think you do," his sister said, with a "superior" smile. And then—perhaps she was tired of hearing so much in praise of Yolande, or perhaps she wished her brother to be cautious, or perhaps she was merely gratuitously malicious—she said, "I'll tell you what it is: I should not be at all surprised to hear that she was engaged, and has been engaged for any length of time."

He was struck silent by this fierce suggestion; it bewildered him for a second or two. Then he exclaimed:—

"Oh, that is absurd—perfectly absurd! I know she is not."

"It would be a joke," continued his sister, with a sardonic smile, "if that were the explanation of the wonderful friendliness that puzzles you so much. If she is engaged, of course she has no further care or embarrassment. Everything is settled. She is as frank with Dick as with Tom and Harry. Oh, Archie, that would be a joke! How Jim would laugh at you!"

"But it isn't true," he said, angrily, "and you know it isn't. It is quite absurd."

"I will find out for you if you like," his sister said, calmly. And here the conversation ceased, for Colonel Graham at this moment came along to ask his brother-in-law for a light.

They were again away from the land, perhaps even forgetful that such a thing existed. It seemed quite natural to get up morning after morning to find around them the same bright, brilliant monotony of white-crested blue seas and sunlit decks and fair skies; and each day passed with

the usual amusements; and then came the still moonlight night, with all its mysterious charm and loneliness. — It was a delightful life, especially for the Grahams and Winterbournes, who were going nowhere in particular, but had come chiefly for the voyage itself. And it was a life the very small incidents of which excited interest, simply because people had plenty of time to consider them—and each other.

There was no doubt that Yolande had become a pretty general favorite; for she found herself very much at home; and she put aside a good deal of that reserve which she assumed in travelling on land. These people could in no sense be considered strangers; they were all too kind to her. The ship's officers brought her the charts out of the chart-room, to show her how far the vessel had got on her course. The captain allowed her to go on the bridge, and gave her his own glass when a distant sail was to be seen. And the young soldiers, when they were not in the smoking-room, and when they were not picking up rope quoits for Mrs. Graham, had an eye on the many strayed birds fluttering about, and when they could they caught one and brought it to Miss Winterbourne, who was glad to take the wild-eyed fluttering wanderer down into the saloon and put its beak for a second or two into a glass of fresh water. The swallows were the most easily caught; they were either more exhausted or more tame than the quails and thrushes and ringdoves. Once or twice Yolande herself caught one of these swallows, and the beautiful bronze-blue creature seemed not anxious to get away from her hand. Mrs. Graham said it was too ludicrous to see the major of a Highland regiment—a man six feet two in height, with a portentously grave face—screw his eyeglass into its place, and set off to stalk a dead-tired thrush, pursuing it along the awning, and from boat to boat. But all the same these warriors seemed pleased enough when they could bring to Yolande one of these trembling captives, and when she took the poor thing carefully into her hands, and looked up, and said, "Oh, thank you." It ought to be mentioned that the short upper lip of the girl, though it had the pathetic droop at the corners which has been mentioned—and which an artist friend of the writer says ought to have been described as Cupid's bow being drawn slightly—lent itself very readily to a smile.

Mrs. Graham watched for a chance of speaking to

Yolande, and soon found it. She went to the girl, who was standing by the rail on the hurricane-deck, and put her arm most affectionately round her, and said :—

“My dear child what are you staring into the sea for? Do you expect to see dolphins?”

“I was wondering what made the water so blue,” said she, raising herself somewhat. “It is not the sky. If you look at the water for awhile, and turn to the sky, the sky is a pale washed-out purple. What a wonderful blue it is, too; it seems to me twenty times more intense than the blue of the water along the Riviera.”

“You have been along the Riviera?”

“Oh, two or three times,” said Yolande. “We always go that way into Italy.”

“You must have travelled a great deal, from what I hear.”

“Yes,” said Yolande, with a slight sigh, “I am afraid it is a great misfortune. It is papa’s kindness to me; but I am sorry. It takes him away. At one time he said it was my education; but now we both laugh at that—for a pretence. Oh, I assure you we are such bad travellers—we never go to see anything that we ought to see. When we go to Venice we go to the Lido and the sands, but to the churches?—no. In Egypt you will have to do all the sight-seeing; you will find us, oh, so very lazy that you cannot imagine it; you will go and see the tombs and the inscriptions, and papa and I, we will take a walk and look at the river until you come back.”

“What a strange life to have led!” said her friend, who had her own point in view. “And among all your wanderings did you never meet the one who is to be nearer and dearer?”

“Nearer and dearer?” said Yolande, looking puzzled. Papa is nearer and dearer to me than any one or anything—naturally. That is why we are always satisfied to be together; that is what makes our travelling so consoling—no—so—so contented.”

“But what I mean is—now forgive me, dear Yolande; you know I’m a very impertinent woman—I mean, in all your travels, have you never come across some one whom you would care to marry? Indeed, indeed, you must have met many a one who would have been glad to carry you off—that I can tell you without flattery.”

“Indeed, not any one,” said Yolande, with a perfectly

frank laugh. "That is not what I would ever think of. That is not what I wish." And then she added, with an air of sadness: "Perhaps I am never to have what I wish—it is a pity, a misfortune."

"What is it then, dear Yolande? In your father's position I don't see what there is in the world he could not get for you. You see I am curious; I am very impertinent; but I should like to treat you as my own sister; I am not quite old enough to act as a mother to you, for all that Jim says."

"Oh, it is simple enough; it does not sound difficult," Yolande said. "Come, we will sit down, and I will tell you."

They sat down on two deck-chairs that happened to be handy, and Mrs Graham took the girl's hand in hers, because she really liked her, although at times human nature broke down, and she thought her husband was carrying his praises of Yolande just a trifle too far.

"When I have met English ladies abroad," said Yolande, "and the one or two families I knew in London, it was so nice to hear them talk of their homes—perhaps in the country, where every one seemed to know them, and they had so many interests, so many affections. They were proud of that. It was a tie. They were not merely wanderers. Even your brother, dear Mrs. Graham, he has filled me with envy of him when he has told me of the district around Lynn Towers, and seeming to know every one, and always settled there, and capable to make friends for a lifetime, not for a few hours in a hotel. What place do I really know in the world; what place do they really know me? A little village in France that you never heard of. And I am English. I am not French. Ah, yes, that is what I have many a time wished—that my papa would have a house like others—in the country?—yes—or in the town?—yes—what does that matter to me? And I should make it pretty for him, and he would have a home—not a hotel; also I have thought of being a secretary to him, but perhaps that is too much beyond what is possible. Do you think I can imagine anything about marrying when this far more serious thing is what I wish? Do you think that any one can be nearer and dearer to me than the one who has given me all his affection, all his life, who thinks only of me, who has sacrificed already far too much for me? Who else has done that for me? And you would not have me ungrateful?"

Besides, also, it is selfish. I do not like the society of any one nearly so much; why should I change for a stranger? But it is not necessary to speak of that; it is a stupidity. But now I have told you what I wish for, if it were possible."

Mrs. Graham was convinced. There was no affectation here. The Master of Lynn had no rival, at all events.

"Do you know, my dear child, you talk very sensibly," said she, patting her hand. "And I don't see why your papa should not give you two homes—one in the country and one in town—for I am sure every one says he is wealthy enough. But perhaps this is the reason. Of course you will marry—no, stay a minute—I tell you, you are sure to marry. Why, the idea! Well, then, in that case, it might be better for your papa not to have a household to break up; he could attend to his Parliamentary duties very well if he lived in the Westminster Palace Hotel, for example, and be free from care—"

Yolande's mouth went very far down this time.

"Yes, that may be it," she said. "Perhaps that will happen. I know I have taken away too much of his time, and once, twice perhaps, we have had jokes about my being married; but this was the end, that when my papa tells me to marry, then I will marry. I must go somewhere. If I am too much of a burden—and sometimes I am very sad, and think that I am—then he must go and bring some one to me, and say, 'Marry him.' And I will marry him—and hate him."

"Gracious heavens, child, what are you saying! Of course, if ever you should marry, you will choose for yourself."

"It is not my affair," said Yolande, coldly. "If I am to go away, I will go away; but I shall hate the one that takes me away."

"Yolande," said her friend, seriously, "you are making it rather hard for your father. Perhaps I have no right to interfere; but you have no mother to guide you; and really you talk such—such absurdity—"

"But how do I make it hard for my papa?" said Yolande, quickly looking up with an anxious glance. "Am I a constraint? Do you think there is something he would do? Am I in his way—a burden to him?"

"No, no, no," said the other, good-humoredly. "Why should you think any such thing? I was only referring to

the madness of your own fancy. The idea that your father is to choose a husband for you—whom you will hate! Now suppose that you are a burden—I believe I informed you that I was a very impertinent woman, and now I am an intermeddler as well—suppose that your father would like to take a more active part in public affairs, and that he knows you are opposed to the very notion of getting married. He is in a painful dilemma. He won't tell you that you are rather interfering with his Parliamentary work. And most assuredly he won't recommend you to marry any one, if you are going to marry with a deadly grudge against your husband."

Yolande thought over this for some minutes.

"I suppose it is true," she said, rather sadly. "He would not tell me. He has said I kept him away from the House of Commons, but then it was only amusement and joking. And I—I also—have many a time been fearing it was not right he should waste so much care on me, when no one else does that with their daughters. Why does he go to the House? Partly because it is his duty to work for the country—to see that it is well governed—partly to make fame, which is a noble ambition. And then I interfere. He thinks I am not quite well, when I am quite well. He thinks I am dull, when I am not dull—when I would rather read his speech in the newspapers than go anywhere. But always the same—I must go and be amused; and Parliament and everything is left behind. It was not so bad when I was at the Chateau; then I was learning; but even then he was always coming to seeme and to take me away. And when I used to say, 'Papa, why don't you take me to England? I am English, I want to see my own country, not other countries,'—it was always 'You will see enough of England by and by. But when I go to England, look! it is the same—always away again, except a week or two, perhaps, at Oatlands Park, or a day or two in London; and I have not once been to the House of Commons, where every one goes, and even my papa is vexed that I do not know they have not a ballroom at the Reform Club!'"

"Well, dear Yolande, you have led a queer sort of life; but, after all, was not your father wise? He could not have a household with a schoolgirl to look after it. But now I can see that all this will be changed, and you will have no more fears that you are a restraint. Of course you will marry, and you will be very happy, and your papa will

have your home to go to at the Easter holidays : and you will go up to town to hear him speak in the House, and he will have a fair chance in politics. So that is all arranged, and you are not to have any wild or fierce theories. There goes dressing-bell—come along !”

Day after day passed without change. The young Master of Lynn had been re-assured by his sister ; and very diligently, and with a Jacob-like modesty and patience, he strove to win Yolande’s regard ; but a though she was always most friendly towards him, and pleased to chat with him, or walk the hurricane deck with him, she seemed to treat him precisely as she treated any of the others. If there was one whom she especially favored, it was Colonel Graham, whose curt, sardonic speeches amused her.

At last they arrived at Port Said, that curious, rectangular-streeted, shanty-built place, that looks like Cheyenne painted pink and white ; and of course there was much wonder and interest in beholding land again, and green water, and the swarming boats with their Greeks and Maltese and negroes and Arabs, all in their various costumes. But it was with a far greater interest that they regarded the picture around them when the vessel had started again, and was slowly and silently stealing away into the wide and lonely desert land by means of this water highway. The Suez Canal had been rather a commonplace phrase to Yolande, mixed up with monetary affairs mostly, and suggestive of machinery. But all this was strange and new, and the vessel was going so slowly that the engines were scarcely heard ; she seemed to glide into this dreamworld of silver sky and far-reaching wastes of yellow sand. It was so silent and so wide and so lonely. For the most part the horizon-line was a mirage, and they watched the continual undulation of the silver white waves, and even the strange reflections of what appeared to be islands ; but here there was not even a palm to break the monotony of the desert—only the little tamarisk bushes dotting the sand. From a marsh a red-legged flamingo rose, slowly winging its way to the south. Then a string of camels came along with forward stretching heads and broad, slow-pacing feet, the Bedouins either perched on the backs of the animals or striding through the sand by their side, their faces looking black in contrast to their white wide-flowing garments. And so they glided through the silent gray, silver, world.

The night saw another scene. They were anchored in

a narrow part of the canal, where the banks were high and steep, and the moonlight was surpassingly vivid. On one of these banks—it seemed a great mountain as it rose to the dark blue vault where the stars were—the moonlight threw the shadow of the rigging of the ship so sharply that every spar and rope was traced on the silver clear sand. There was an almost oppressive silence in this desert solitude; a dark animal that came along through the tamarisk bushes—some said it was a jackal—disappeared up and over the sand mountain like a ghost. And in the midst of this weird cold moonlight and silence these people began to get up a dance after dinner. The piano was brought on deck from the saloon. The women-folk had put on their prettiest costumes. There had been perhaps (so it was said) a little begging and half-promising going on beforehand. The smoking-room was deserted. From the supports of the awnings a number of large lanterns had been slung, so that when the ladies began to appear, and when the first notes of the music were heard, the scene was a very animated and pretty one, but so strange with the moonlit desert around.

The Master of Lynn had got hold of Yolande; he had been watching for her appearance.

“I hope you will give me a dance, Miss Winterbourne,” said he.

“Oh yes, with pleasure,” said she, in the most friendly way.

“There are no programmes, of course,” said he. “And one can’t make engagements; but I think a very good rule in a thing like this is that one should dance with one’s friends. For myself, I don’t care to dance with strangers. It doesn’t interest me. I think when people form a party among themselves on board ship—well, I think they should keep to themselves.”

“Oh, but that is very selfish, is it not?” Yolande said. “We are not supposed to be strangers with any one after being on board ship so long together.”

“Miss Winterbourne, may I have the pleasure of dancing this waltz with you?” said a tall, solemn man with an eyeglass; and the next moment the Master of Lynn beheld Yolande walking toward that cleared space with Major Mackinnon, of the Seaforth Highlanders; and as to what he thought of the Seaforth Highlanders, and what he hoped

would happen to them, from their colonel down to their pipe-major, it is unnecessary to say anything here.

But Yolande did give him the next dance, which mollified him a little—not altogether, however, for it was only a square. The next was a Highland Schottische; and by ill luck he took it for granted that Yolande, having been brought up in France, would know nothing about it; so he went away and sought out his sister. Their performance was the feature of the evening. No one else thought of interfering. And it was very cleverly and prettily and artistically done; in so much that a round of applause greeted them at the end, even from the young Highland officers, who considered that young Leslie might just as well have sought a partner elsewhere instead of claiming his own sister. Immediately after, the Master of Lynn returned to Yolande.

“Ah, that is very pretty,” she said. “No wonder they approved you and clapped their hands. It is the most picturesque of all the dances, especially when there are only two, and you have the whole deck for display. In a ballroom, perhaps no.”

“You must learn it, Miss Winterbourne, before you come North,” said he. “We always dance it in the North.”

“Oh, but I know it very well,” said Yolande quietly.

“You?” said he, in an injured way. “Why didn’t you tell me? Do you think I wanted to dance with my sister, and leave you here?”

“But Mrs. Graham and you danced it so prettily—oh, so very well indeed—”

There was somebody else approaching them now—for the lady at the piano had that instant begun another waltz. This was Captain Douglas also of the Seaforth Highlanders.

“Miss Winterbourne, if you are not engaged will you give me this waltz?”

Yolande did not hesitate. Why should she? She was not engaged.

“Oh yes, thanks,” said she, with much friendliness, and she rose and took Captain Douglas’s arm.

But Leslie could not bear this perfidy, as he judged it. He would have no more to do with the dance, or with her. Without a word to any one he went away to the smoking-room, and sat down there, savage and alone. He lit a cigar, and smoked vehemently.

“Polly talks about men being bamboozled by women,”

he was thinking bitterly. "She knows nothing about it. It is women who know nothing about women; they hide themselves from each other. But she was right on one point. That girl is the most infernal flirt that ever stepped the earth."

And still, far away, he could hear the sound of the music, and also the stranger sound—like a whispering of silken wings—of feet on the deck. He was angry and indignant. Yolande could not be blind to his constant devotion to her, and yet she treated him exactly as if he were a stranger—going off with the first-comer. Simplicity! His sister was right—it was the simplicity of a first class flirt.

And still the waltz went on; and he heard the winnowing sound of the dancers' feet; and his thoughts were bitter enough. He was only five-and-twenty; at that age hopes and fears and disappointments are emphatic and near; probably it never occurred to him to turn from the vanities of the hour, and from the petty throbbing anxieties and commonplaces of everyday life, to think of the awful solitudes all around him there—the voiceless, world-old desert lying so dim and strange under the moonlight and the stars, its vast and mysterious heart quite pulseless and calm.

CHAPTER IX.

CLOUDS.

NEXT morning, quite unconscious that she had dealt any deadly injury to any one, Yolande was seated all by herself on the hurricane-deck, idly and carelessly and happily drinking in fresh clear air, and looking away over the wastes of golden sand to a strip of intense dark blue that was soon to reveal itself as the waters of a lake. She was quite alone. The second officer had brought her one of the ship's glasses, and had then (greatly against his will) gone on the bridge again. The morning was fair and shining; the huge steamer was going placidly and noiselessly through the still water; if Yolande was thinking of anything, it was proba-

ably that she had never seen her father so pleased and contented as on this long voyage; and perhaps she was wondering whether, after all, it might not be quite as well that he should give up Parliament altogether, so that they two might wander away through the world, secure in each other's company.

Nor was she aware that at this precise moment her future was being accurately arranged for her in one of the cabins below.

"I confess I don't see where there can be the least objection." Mrs. Graham was saying to her husband (who was still lying in his berth, turning over the pages of a novel), as she fixed a smart mob-cap on her short and pretty curls. "I have looked at it every way. Papa may make a fuss about Mr. Winterbourne's politics, but there are substantial reasons why he should say as little as possible. Just think how he has worked at the improving of the estate—all his life—and with scarcely any money; and just fancy Archie coming in to complete the thing! I know what I would do. I would drain and plant the rushed slopes, and build a nice lodge there; and then I would take the sheep off Allt-nam-Ba, and make it a small forest; and it would let for twice as much again. Oh Jim, just fancy if Archie were to be able to buy back Corrievreak!"

Her husband flung the book aside, and put his hands under his head. His imagination was at work.

"If I were Archie," he said, with his eyes fixed on vacancy, "I would make Corrievreak the sanctuary; that's what I would do. Then I would put a strip of sheep up the Glenbuie side to fence off Sir John; do you see that, Polly? And then I would take the sheep off Allt-nam-Ba, as you say, only I would add on All-nam-Ba to Lynn. Do you see that? What made your grandfather part with Corrievreak I don't know. Fancy having the sanctuary within two miles of a steamboat pier: it's a standing temptation to all the poachers in the country! Now if you take in Allt-nam-Ba, and make Corrievreak the sanctuary, and if you'd hold your hand for a year or two in the letting, you'd soon have one of the best forests in Scotland. But letting is the mischief. Those fellows from the south shoot anything on four legs they can get at. Forty years ago the finest stags in Invernessshire were found round and about Corrievreak; the Fork Augustus lads knew that, they used to say. Oh, I quite agree with you. I think it would be

an uncommon good match. And then Archie would have a house in town, I suppose; and they might put us up for a week or two in the season. 'Tit for tat's fair play. He has the run of Inverstroy when there isn't a bit of rabbit-shooting left to him at Lynn."

"Well, but there's just this, you know, Jim," his wife said, with an odd kind of smile. "We know very little about what kind of girl she is, and Archie knows less than we do."

"Oh, she's well enough," said the stout soldier, carelessly. That was a subsidiary point. What his mind clearly grasped was the importance of having Corrievreak made the sanctuary of the deer forest.

"She is well enough, no doubt," his wife said; and as she had finished her toilette she now stood and regarded, him, with a demure kind of hesitation in her face, as if she were afraid to confess her thoughts. "She is well enough. She has good manners. She is distinguished-looking, for a girl of her age; and you know all the money in Slagpool wouldn't induce papa to receive a dowdy daughter-in-law. And she doesn't flirt—unless—well, it's just possible she knows that that indifference of hers is attractive to young men; it puts them on their mettle, and touches their vanity. But after all, Jim, we know very little about the girl. We don't know what sort of a wife she would make. She has come through nothing; less than most girls; for she might as well have been in a convent as in that Chateau. And of course she can't expect life always to be as pleasant for her; and—and—she has come through no crisis to show what kind of stuff she is made of; and we might all be mistaken—"

"Oh, I see what you're driving at," her husband said, with just a touch of contempt, "Don't be alarmed; I dare say Archie isn't anxious to marry a tragedy queen. I don't see why Miss Winterbourne should be put to any fiery trial, or should have to go through mortal agonies, any more than the majority of young women in exceptionally easy circumstances. And if she should, I have no doubt she will show common-sense, and men prefer common-sense to hysterics—a long way. I think she has common-sense; and I don't see why she and Archie shouldn't marry, and have a pleasant enough time of it; and I suppose they will quarrel until one or other gets tired of quarrelling, and refuses; and if they only have a tidy little house about Bruton Street or

Conduit Street and a good cook, it will be very convenient for us. Now I wish to goodness you'd clear out, and let me get dressed."

The dismissal was summary, but pretty Mrs. Graham was a good-natured woman, and with much equanimity she left the cabin, made her way along the saloon, and up the companionway to the outer air. About the first person she ran against was her brother, and black thunder was on his face.

"Where is Miss Winterbourne?" she said, inadvertently, and without reflecting that the question was odd.

"On the hurricane-deck," said he. "I dare say you will find half the officers of the ship round her."

There was something in his tone which caused his sister, with considerable sharpness, to ask him what he meant; and then out came the story of his wrongs. Now Mrs. Graham had not been too well pleased when her husband and everybody else sang the praises of Yolande to her; but no sooner was the girl attacked in this way than she instantly, and with a good deal of warmth, flew to her defence. What right had he to suppose that Miss Winterbourne ought to have singled him out as different from the others? Why should she not dance with whomsoever she pleased? If the ship's officers showed her some little ordinary courtesies, why should she not be civil in return? What right of possession had he in her? What was he to her in any way whatever?

"You said yourself she was a flirt," her brother retorted.

"I?" she said. "I? I said nothing of the kind! I said that the preposterous innocence that you discovered in her was more like the innocence of a confirmed flirt. But that only shows me that you know nothing at all about her. To imagine that she should have kept all her dances for you——"

"I imagined nothing of the sort," he answered, with equal vehemence. "But I imagined that as we were travelling together as friends, even a small amount of friendliness might have been shown. But it is no matter."

"You are quite right, it is no matter," she interrupted. "I have no doubt Miss Winterbourne will find plenty to understand her character a little better than you seem to do. You seem to think that you should have everything—that everything should be made smooth and pleasant for

you. I suppose, when you marry, you will expect your wife to go through life with her ballroom dress on. It isn't her womanly nature that you will be thinking of, but whether she dresses well enough to make other women envious."

All this was somewhat incoherent; but there was a confused recollection in her brain of what she had been saying to her husband, and also perhaps a vague impression that these words were exculpating herself from certain possible charges.

"You don't consider whether a woman is fit to stand the test of suffering and trouble: do you think she is always going to be a pretty doll to sit at the head of your dinner table? You think you know what Yolande's nature is; but you know nothing about it. You know that she has pretty eyes, perhaps; and you get savage when she looks at any one else."

She turned quickly away; Yolande had at that moment appeared at the top of the steps. And when she came down to the deck Mrs. Graham caught her with both hands, and kissed her, and still held her hands and regarded her most affectionately.

"Dear Yolande, how well you are looking!" she exclaimed (meaning that her brother should hear, but he had walked away). "Dissipation does not harm you a bit. But indeed a dance on the deck of a ship is not like a dance in town——"

Yolande glanced around; there was no one by.

"Dear Mrs. Graham," said she, "I have a secret to ask you. Do you think your brother would do me a great favor? Dare I ask him?"

"Why, yes, of course," said the other, with some hesitation and a little surprise. "Of course he would be delighted."

She could see that Yolande, at least, knew nothing of the fires of rage or jealousy she had kindled.

"I will tell you what it is, then. I wish my papa to think that I can manage—oh, everything! when we go to the house in the Highlands. I wish that he may have no trouble or delay; that everything should be quite ready and quite right. Always he has said, 'Oh, you are a child; why do you want a house? Why should you have vexation?' But, dear Mrs. Graham, I do not mind the trouble at all; and I am filled with joy when I think of the time I

am to go to the shops in Inverness; and papa will see that I can remember everything that is wanted; and he will have no bother at all; and he will see that I can look after a house, and then he will not be so afraid to take one in London or the country, and to have a proper home as every one else has. And this is what I would ask of your brother, if he will be so very kind. He will be at Inverness before any of us, I suppose?"

"No doubt; but why should you look so far ahead, Yolande, and trouble yourself?"

"It is no trouble; it is a delight. You were speaking of the carriage we should want, and the horses, to drive between Allt-nam-Ba and the steamboat pier. Now all the other things that I have made a list of——"

"Already?"

"When you were so good as to tell me them, I put them down on a sheet of paper—it is safer; but the carriage: do you think I might ask your brother to hire that for us for the three months? Then when papa goes to Inverness there will be no bother or waiting; everything in readiness; the carriage and horses engaged; the dogs sent on before, the cook at the lodge, with luncheon ready, or dinner, if it is late; all the bedroom things nicely aired; all right—everything right. Do you think I might ask Mr. Leslie? Do you think he would be so kind?"

"Oh, I am sure he would be delighted," said Mrs. Graham (with some little misgiving about Archie's existing mood). "I fancy he has promised to get your papa a couple of ponies for the game panniers; and he might as well get you a dog-cart at the same time. I should say a four-wheeled dog-cart and one stout serviceable horse would be best for you; with perhaps a spring-cart and an additional pony—to trot in with the game to the steamer. But Archie will tell you. It sounds so strange to talk about such things—here. Jim and I had a chat about the Highlands this very morning."

"I will speak to your brother after breakfast, then."

But after breakfast, as it turned out, the Master of Lynn was nowhere to be found. Yolande wondered that he did not as usual come up to the hurricane-deck to play "Bull," or have a promenade with her; but thought he was perhaps writing letters in the saloon, to be posted that night at Suez. She did not like to ask: she only waited. She played "Bull" with her father, and got sadly beaten. She

had a smart promenade with Colonel Graham, who told her some jungle stories; but she was thinking of the Highlands all the time. She began to be impatient and set to work to devise letters, couched in such business phraseology as she knew, requesting a firm of livery-stable keepers to state their terms for the hire of a dog-cart and horse for three months, the wages of the groom included.

There was no need to hurry. There had been some block in the canal, and the huge bulk of the ship was now lying idly in the midst of the Greater Bitter Lake. All around them was the wide plain of dazzling blue-green water, and beyond that the ruddy brown strip of the desert quivered in the furnace-like heat; while overhead shone the pale clear sky, cloudless and breathless. Yolande, as usual, wore neither hat nor bonnet; but she was less reckless in venturing from under shelter of the awnings. And some of the old Anglo-Indians were hoping that the punkahwallahs would be set to work at dinner-time.

The Master of Lynn had not shown up at breakfast; but he made his appearance at lunch, and he greeted Yolande with a cold "good-morning" and a still colder bow. Yolande, in truth, did not notice any change in his manner at first, but by and by she could not fail to perceive that he addressed the whole of his conversation to Colonel Graham, and that he had not a single word for her, though he was sitting right opposite to her. Well, she thought, perhaps this question as to whether they were to get through to Suez that evening was really very important. It did not much matter to her. She was more interested in Inverness than in Suez; and among the most prized of her possessions was a long list of things necessary for a shooting lodge, apart from the supplies which she was to send from the Army and Navy Stores. She felt she was no longer a schoolgirl, nor even a useless and idle wanderer. Her father should see what she could do. Was he aware that she knew that ordinary blacking was useless for shooting boots, and that she had got "dubbing" down in her list?

"Archie," said Mrs. Graham to her brother the first time she got hold of him after lunch, "you need not be rude to Miss Winterbourne."

"I hope I have not been," said he, somewhat stiffly.

"You treated her as if she were an absolute stranger at

lunch. Not that I suppose she cares. But for your own sake you might show better manners."

"I think you mistake the situation," said he, with apparent indifference. "'Do as you're done by' is a very good motto. It is for her to say whether we are to be friends, acquaintances, or strangers; and if she chooses to treat you on the least-favored-nation scale, I suppose you've got to accept that. It is for her to choose. It is a free country."

"I think you are behaving abominably. I suppose you are jealous of those young officers; men who are not in the army always are; they know women like a man who can fight."

"Fight! Smoke cigarettes and play sixpenny Nap, you mean. That's about all the fighting they've ever done."

"Do you say that about Jim?" said the young wife, with a flash of indignation in her eyes. "Why—"

"I wasn't aware that Graham was a candidate for Miss Winterbourne's favors," said he.

"Well, now," she said, "you are making a fool of yourself, all to no purpose. If you are jealous of them, won't you be rid of the whole lot of them to-night, supposing we get to Suez? And we shall be all by ourselves after that; and I am sure I expected we should make such a pleasant and friendly party."

"But I am quite willing" said he. "If I meet Miss Winterbourne on terms of her own choosing, surely that is only leaving her the liberty she is entitled to. There is no quarrel, Polly. Don't be aghast. If Miss Winterbourne wishes to be friendly, good and well; if not, good and better. No bones will be broken."

"I tell you this at least," said his sister, as a parting warning or entreaty, "that she is perfectly unconscious of having given you any offence. She has been anxious to speak to you all day, to ask you for a favor. She wants you to hire a dog-cart and a spring-cart for them when you go to Inverness. If she thought there was anything (the matter, would she ask a favor of you?"

"There is nothing the matter," he rejoined, with perfect equanimity. "And I am quite willing to hire any number of dog-carts for her—when she asks me."

But oddly enough, whether it was that Yolande had detected something unusual in his manner, or whether that item in her list of preparations had for the moment escaped

her memory, or whether it was that the ship had again started, and everybody was eagerly looking forward to reaching Suez that night, nothing further was then said of the request that Yolande had intended to make. Indeed, she had but little opportunity of speaking to him that afternoon, for most of her time was taken up in finally getting ready for quitting the big steamer, and in helping Mrs. Graham to do likewise. When they did reach Suez it was just dinner-time, and that meal was rather hurried over; for there were many good-bys to be said, and people could be got at more easily on deck.

The clear, hot evening was sinking into the sudden darkness of the Egyptian night when the Grahams and Winterbournes got into the railway carriage that was to take them along to the hotel; and a whole crowd of passengers had come ashore to bid them a last good-by, amongst them notably the young Highland officers.

"Lucky beggars!" said Colonel Graham, rather ruefully. "Don't you wish you were going out, Polly? Wouldn't you like to be going out again?"

"Not I. Think of dear Baby, Jim!"

"By Jove!" said he, "if Colin Mackenzie were here with his pipes to play 'The Barren Rocks of Aden,' I believe I'd go. I believe nothing could keep me."

And so they bade good-by to those boys; and Mrs. Graham and Yolande found themselves overladen with fruit and flowers when the train started. They were tired after so much excitement, and very soon went to bed after reaching the hotel.

Next morning they set out for Cairo; the Master quite courteous, in a reserved kind of a way; his sister inwardly chafing; Yolande perhaps a trifle puzzled. Colonel Graham and Mr. Winterbourne, on the other hand, knowing nothing of these subtle matters, were wholly engrossed by the sights without. For though at first there was nothing but the vast monotony of the desert—a blazing stretch of sun-brown, with perhaps now and again a string of camels looking quite black on the far horizon-line—that in time gave way to the wide and fertile plains of the Nile Valley. Slowly enough the train made its way through these teeming plains, with all their strange features of Eastern life—the mud-built villages among the palms; herds of buffaloes coming down to wallow in the river; oxen trampling out the corn in the open; camels slowly pacing along in Indian

file, or here and there tethered to a tree; strange birds flying over the interminable breadths of golden grain. And of course, when they reached Cairo, that wonderful city was still more bewildering to European eyes—the picturesque forms and brilliant costumes; the gayly caparisoned donkeys, ridden by veiled women, whose black eyes gleamed as they passed; the bare-legged runner with his long wand clearing the way for his master on horseback; the swarthy Arabs leading their slow-moving camels; and side by side with the mosques and minarets and Moorish houses, the French-looking cafés and shops, to say nothing of the French-looking public gardens, with the European servant-maids and children listening to the tinkling music from the latest Parisian comic opera.

Then they got them to a large hotel, fronting these public gardens, the spacious hall and corridors of which were gratefully cool, while outside there was such a mass of verdure—flowering shrubs and palms, wide-leaved bananas, and here and there a giant eucalyptus—as was exceedingly pleasant to eyes long accustomed to only the blue of the sea and the yellow-white of the deck. Moreover, they were in ample time for the table d'hôte; and every one, after the dust and heat, was glad to have a thorough change of raiment.

When the guests assembled in the long and lofty dining-saloon (there were not many, for most of the spring tourists had already left, while many of the European residents in Cairo had gone away, anticipating political troubles), it was clear that Mrs. Graham and her younger companion had taken the opportunity of donning a shore-toilette. Mrs. Graham's costume was certainly striking: it was a deep crimson, of some richly brocaded stuff; and she had some red flowers in her black hair. Yolande's was simpler: the gown a muslin of white or nearly white; and the only color she wore was a bit of light salmon-colored silk that came round her neck, and was fastened in a bow in front. She had nothing in her hair, but the light falling on it from above was sufficient, and even glorious, adornment. For jewelry she had two small ear-rings, each composed of minute points of pale turquoise; perhaps these only served to show more clearly the exquisite purity of her complexion, where the soft oval of the cheek met the ear.

“By heavens,” the Master of Lynn said to himself, the

moment he had seen her come in at the wide door, "that girl is the most beautiful creature I have ever seen!"

He was startled into renewed admiration of her. He could not keep his eyes away from her; he found himself listening with a quick sympathy and approval when she spoke; and as her face was all lit up with excitement and gladness because of the strange things she had seen, he followed her varying expressions, and found himself being helplessly drawn under a witchery which he could not, and did not strive much to withstand. She spoke mostly—and she was pleasantly excited and talkative this evening—to her father and to Mrs. Graham; but sometimes, perhaps inadvertently, she glanced his way as she spoke, and then he eagerly agreed with what she was saying, before he knew what it was. She, at least, had no covert quarrel with him or with any one else. Delight shone in her eyes. When she laughed it was like music. Even her father thought that she was looking unusually bright and happy; and so that made him very contented too; but his satisfaction took the form of humorous grumbling and he declared that he didn't know what she was made of—that she should be making merry after the long day's heat and dust, that had nearly killed every one else.

After dinner they all flocked into the reading-room, anxious to have a look at the English papers—all except the Master of Lynn, who left the hotel, and was absent for a little time. When he returned he went into the reading-room, and (with a certain timidity) went up to Yolande.

"Miss Winterbourne," said he, not very loudly, "wouldn't it be pleasanter for you to sit outside and see the people passing? It is very interesting; and they are playing music in the gardens. It is much cooler out of doors."

"Oh yes," said Yolande, without the least hesitation; and instantly she rose and walked out, just as she was, on to the terrace, he modestly attending her. He brought her a chair; and she sat down by the railings to watch the picturesque crowd. She spoke to him just in her usual way.

"Miss Winterbourne," said he at length, "I have got you a little case of attar of roses; will you take it? When you get home, if you put it in your wardrobe, it will last a long time; and it is sure to remind you of Cairo."

"When I get home?" she repeated, rather sadly. "I

have no home. I do not understand it. I do not understand why my papa should not have a home, as other people have."

"Well, then, will you take it to Allt-nam-Ba?" said he. "That will be your home for awhile."

At the mere mention of the place her face brightened up.

"Oh yes," she said, in the most friendly way, "that will indeed be a home for us for awhile. Oh, thank you; it is very kind of you. I shall prize it very much."

"And Polly was saying you wanted me to take some commissions for you to Inverness," said he, abasing himself to the uttermost. "I should be awfully glad; I should be delighted—"

"Oh, will you?" she said; and she rewarded him with an upward glance of gratitude that drove Cairo, and Inverness, and dog-carts, and everything else clean out of his head. "And you are not anxious to read the newspapers?"

"No—not at all."

"Then will you sit down and tell me a little more about Allt-nam-Ba? Ah, you do not know how I look forward to it. If it is only for three months, still it is a home, as you say, all to ourselves; and my papa and I have never been together like that before. I am so glad to think of it and I am frightened too, in case I do anything wrong. But your sister has been very kind to me. And there is another thing, if I make mistakes at the beginning—well, I believe my papa does not know how to be angry with me."

"Well, I should think not—I should think not indeed!" said he, as if it were quite an impossible thing for anybody to be angry with Yolande.

CHAPTER X.

IN THE NIGHT.

HE had at last discovered an easy way of gaining her favor. She was so anxious to prove to her father that she was a capable house-mistress that she was profoundly grate-

ful for any hint that might help; and she spared neither time nor trouble in acquiring the most minute information. Then all this had to be done in a more or less secret fashion. She wished the arrangements at the shooting lodge to be something of a surprise. Her father, on getting up to Inverness-shire was to find everything in perfect order; then he would see whether or not she was fit to manage a house. She had even decided (after serious consultation with the Master of Lynn) that when the gillies went up the hill with the shooting party, she would give them their lunch rather than the meaner alternative of a shilling apiece; and when the Master suggested that oat-cake and cheese were quite sufficient for that, she said no—that as her father, she knew, would not have either whiskey or beer about the place, she would make it up to the men in giving them a good meal.

This decision was arrived at, of all places in the world, in the gimcrack wooden building that Ismail had put up at the foot of the Great Pyramid for the reception of his guests. The Grahams and Winterbournes had, as a matter of course, driven out to see the Pyramids and the Sphinx; but when there was a talk of their climbing to the top of the Great Pyramid, Yolande flatly refused to be hauled about by the Arabs; so that Mrs. Graham (who had her little ambitions) and her husband and Mr. Winterbourne started by themselves, leaving the Master of Lynn, who eagerly accepted the duty, to keep Yolande company. And so these two were now sitting well content in this big, bare, cool apartment, the chief ornament of which was a series of pictures on the wall—landscapes, in fact, so large and wild and vehement in color that one momentarily expected to hear a sharp whistle, followed by carpenters rushing in to run them off the stage.

“I suppose, Miss Winterbourne,” said he (it was an odd kind of conversation to take place at the foot of the Great Pyramid), “your father would like to kill a few red deer while he is at Allt-nam-Ba?”

“Oh yes, I know he is looking forward to that.”

“Do you think,” said he, with a peculiar smile, “that it would be very wicked and monstrous if I were to sacrifice my father’s interests to your father’s interests? I should think not myself. There are two fathers in the case; what one loses the other gains.”

“I do not understand you,” Yolande said.

“Well, this is the point. What deer may be found in the Allt-nam-Ba gullies will most likely go in from our forest. Sometimes they cross from Sir John’s; but I fancy our forest contributes most of them; they like to nibble a little at the bushes for a change, and indeed in very wild weather they are sometimes driven down from the forest to get shelter among the trees. Oh, don’t you know?” he broke in, noticing some expression of her eyes. “There are no trees in the deer forest—none at all—except perhaps a few stunted birches down in the corries. Well, you see, as the deer go in from our forest into your gullies, it is our interest that they should be driven out again, and it is your interest that they should stay. And I don’t think they will stay if there is not a glass of whiskey about the place. That was the hint I meant to give you Miss Winterbourne.”

“But I don’t understand yet,” said Yolande. “Whiskey?”

“All your father’s chances at the deer will depend on the goodwill of the shepherds. The fact is, we put some sheep on Allt-nam-Ba, mostly as a fence to the forest; there is no pasturage to speak of; but of course the coming and going of the shepherds and the dogs drive the deer back. Now supposing—just listen to me betraying my father’s interests and my own?—supposing there is an occasional glass of whiskey about, and that the shepherds are on very friendly terms with you; then not only are they the first to know when a good stag has come about, but they might keep themselves and their dogs down in the bothy until your father had gone out with his rifle. Now do you see?”

“Oh yes! oh yes!” said Yolande, eagerly. “It is very kind of you. But what am I to do? My father would not have whiskey in the house—oh, never, never—not for all the deer in the country. Yet it is sad—it is provoking! I should be so proud if he were to get some beautiful fine horns to be hung up in the hall when we take a house some day. It is very, very, very provoking.”

“There is another way,” said he, quietly, “as the cookery book says. You need not have whiskey in the house. You might order a gallon or two in Inverness and give it in charge to Duncan, the keeper. He would have it in his bothy, and would know what to do with it.”

Out came her note book in a second. *Two gallons of whiskey addressed to Mr. Duncan Macdonald, gamekeeper, Allt-nam-Ba, with note explaining.* At the same moment

the dragoman entered the room to prepare lunch, and a glance out of the window showed them the other members of the party at the foot of that great blazing mass of ruddy yellow that rose away into the pale blue Egyptian sky.

"Mind you don't say I have had anything to do with it," said he (and he was quite pleased that this little secret existed between them). "My father would think I was mad in giving you these hints. But yet I don't think it is good policy to be so niggardly. If your father kills three or four stags this year, the forest will be none the worse, and Allnam-Ba will let all the more easily another season. And I hope it is not the last time we shall have you as neighbors."

She did not answer the implied question; for now the other members of the party entered the room, breathless and hot and fatigued, but glad to be able to shut back at last the clamoring horde of Arabs who were still heard protesting and vociferating without.

That same evening they left Cairo by the night train for Asyoot, where the dahabeeyah of the Governor of Merhadj was awaiting them; and for their greater convenience they took their dinner with them. That scrambled meal in the railway carriage was something of an amusement, and in the midst of it all the young Master of Lynn would insist on Yolande's having a little wine. She refused at first, merely as her ordinary habit was; but when he learned that she had never tasted wine at all, of any kind whatever, he begged of her still more urgently to have the smallest possible quantity.

"It will make you sleep, Miss Winterbourne, said he, "and you know how distressing a wakeful night journey is."

"Oh, no!" she said, with a smile, "not all. There is to be moonlight, and why should not one lie awake? My papa wished me not to drink wine, and so I have not, and I have never thought about it. The ladies at the Chateau scarcely took any; they said it was not any better than water."

"But fancy you never having tasted it at all!" he said, and then he turned to her father. "Mr. Winterbourne, will you give Miss Yolande permission to take a very little wine—to taste it?"

The reply of her father was singular:

"I would sooner see her drink Prussic acid—then the and would be at once," said he.

Now this answer was so abrupt, and apparently so unnecessarily harsh, that the Master of Lynn, not knowing what blunder he had made, immediately strove to change the subject, and the most agreeable thing he could think of to mention to Yolande's father was the slaying of stags.

"While you were going up the Great Pyramid this morning, Mr. Winterbourne," said he, "we were talking about what you were likely to do at Allt-nam-Ba, and I was telling your daughter I hoped you would get a stag or two."

"Yes?—oh, yes," said Mr. Winterbourne, apparently recalling himself from some reverie by an effort of will. "A stag? I hope so. Oh, yes, I hope so. We will keep a sharp lookout."

"Miss Winterbourne," said the younger man, with a significant glance at her which seemed to remind her that they had a secret in common, "was surprised to hear that there were no trees in a deer forest. But her ignorance was very excusable. How could she know? It wasn't half as bad as the talk of those fellows in Parliament and the newspapers who howl because the deer forests are not given over to sheep, or to cattle, or turned into small crofts. Goodness gracious! I wonder if any one of them ever saw a deer forest? Miss Winterbourne, that will be something for you to see—the solitude and desolation of the forest—mile after mile of the same moorland and hill without a sound, or the sight of a living thing—"

"But is not that their complaint—that so much land is taken away, and not for people to live on?" said Yolande, who had stumbled on this subject somewhere in following her father's Parliamentary career.

"Yes," said he, ironically. "I wonder what they'd find there to live on. They'd find granite boulders, and withered moss, and a hard grass that sheep won't touch, and that cattle won't touch, and that even mountain hares would starve on. The deer is the only living animal that can make anything of it, and even he is fond of getting into the gullies to have a nibble at the birch-trees. I wish those Radical fellows knew something of what they were talking about before making all that fuss about the Game Laws. The Game Laws won't hurt you if you choose to keep from thieving."

"But you are a Liberal, are you not?" said Yolande with wide-open eyes. Of course she concluded that any one claiming the friendship of her father and herself must

needs be a Liberal. Travelling in the same party too? why—

Well, it was fortunate for the Master that he found himself absolved from replying; for Mr. Winterbourne broke in, with a sardonic kind of smile on his face.

“That is a very good remark of yours, Mr. Leslie,” said he; “a very good remark indeed. I have something of the same belief myself, though I shock some of my friends by saying so. I am for having pretty stringent laws all round, and the best defence for them is this—that you need not break them unless you choose. It may be morally wrong to hang a man for stealing a sheep; but all you have got to do is not to steal the sheep. Well, if I pay seven hundred and fifty pounds for a shooting, and you come on my land and steal my birds, I don’t care what may happen to you. The laws may be a little severe; but your best plan would have been to earn your living in a decent way, instead of becoming an idle, sneaking, lying, and thieving poacher—”

“Oh, certainly, certainly,” said the younger man, with great warmth.

“That is my belief, at all events,” said Mr. Winterbourne, with the same curious sort of smile; “and it answers two ends: it enables me to approve my gamekeeper for the time being, when otherwise I might think he was just a little too zealous; and also it serves to make some friends of mine in the House very wild; and you know there is nothing so deplorable as lethargy.”

“But you are a Liberal, Mr. Leslie, are you not?” repeated Yolande.

And here again he was saved—by the ready wit of his sister.

“My dearest Yolande, what are you talking about?” she said. “What these two have been saying would make a Liberal or a Radical jump out of his five senses—or is it seven? It is seven, Jim?”

“I don’t know,” her husband said, lazily. “Five are quite enough for a Radical.”

“I know I used to have a great sympathy with poachers,” continued pretty Mrs. Graham. “It always seemed to me romantic—I mean when you read about the poacher in poems—his love of sport, you know—”

“His love of sport,” her husband growled, contemptuously. “A miserable sneaking fellow loafing about the

public-house all day, and then stealing out at night with his ferrets and his nets to snare rabbits for the market. A love of sport!"

"Oh, but I can remember," said she, stoutly, "when I was a girl, there were other stories than that. That is the English poacher. I can remember when it was quite well known that the Badenoch young fellows were coming into the forest for a deer, and it was winked at by everybody when they did not come more than twice or thrice in the year. And that was not for the market. Anybody could have a bit of venison who wanted; and I have heard that there was a fine odor of cooking in the shepherds' bothies just about that time."

"That has nothing to do with the Game Laws," her husband said curtly. "I doubt whether deer are protected by the Game Laws at all. I think it is only a question of trespass. But I quite agree with Mr. Winterbourne; if laws are too severe, your best plan is not to break them."

"Well, I was cured of my sympathy on one occasion," said Mrs. Graham, cheerfully (having warded off danger from her brother). "Do you remember, Jim? You and I were driving down Glenstroy, and we came on some gypsies. They had a tent by the roadside; and you know, dear Yolande, I wasn't an old married woman in those days, and grown suspicious; and I thought it would be nice to stop and speak to the poor people, and give them some money to get proper food when they reached a village. Do you know what Jim said?—'Money for food? Most likely they are plucking a brace of my uncle's black game.' Well, they were not. We got down from the trap, and went into the little tent; and they weren't plucking a brace of black game, but they were cooking two hen pheasants on a spit as comfortable as might be. I suppose a gypsy wouldn't do much good as a deerstalker, though?"

And while they thus sat and chatted about the far northern wilds (Yolande was deeply interested, and the Master of Lynn perceived that; and he had himself an abundance of experience about deer) the sunset went, and presently, and almost suddenly, they found themselves in the intense blackness of the tropical night. When from time to time they looked out of the window they could see nothing at all of the world around, though Jupiter and Venus were shining clear and high in the western heavens, and Orion's jewels were paling as they sank; and away in the

south, near the horizon, the solitary Sirius gleaned. But as the night went on (and they were still talking of Scotland) a pale light—a sort of faint yellow smoke—appeared in the southeast, and then a sharp, keen glint of gold revealed the edge of the moon. The light grew and spread up into the sky, and now the world around them was no longer an indistinguishable mass of black; its various features became distinct as the soft radiance became fuller and fuller; and by and by they could make out the walls of the sleeping villages, with their strange shadows, and the tall palms that threw reflections down on the smooth and ghostly water. Can anything be more solemn than moonlight on a grove of palms—the weird darkness of them, the silence, the consciousness that all around lies the white, still desert? Yolande's fancies were no longer far away; this silent, moonlit world out there was a strange thing.

Then, one by one, the occupants of the railway carriage dropped off to sleep; and Yolande slept too, turning her face into the window corner somewhat, and letting her hands sink placidly into her lap. He did not sleep; how could he? He had some vague idea that he ought to be guardian over her; and then—as he timidly regarded the perfect lines of her forehead and chin and throat, and the delicacy of the small ear, and the sweep of the soft lashes—he wondered that this beautiful creature should have been so long in the world and he wasting the years in ignorance; and then (for with youth there is little diffidence; it is always, "I have chosen; you are mine; you can not be any other than mine") he thought of her as the mistress of Lynn Towers. In black velvet would she not look handsome, seated at the head of the dinner table; or in a tall-backed chair by the fireplace, with the red glow from the birch logs and the peat making glimmerings on her hair? He thought of her driving down the Glen; on the steamboat quay; on board the steamboat; in the streets of Inverness; and he knew that nowhere could she have any rival.

And then it occurred to him that what air was made by the motion of the train must be blowing in upon her face, and that the sand-blinds of the windows were not sufficient protection, and he thought he could rig up something that would more effectually shield her. So, in the silence and semi-darkness, he stealthily got hold of a light shawl of his sister's, and set to work to fasten one end to the top of the

carriage door and the other to the netting for the hand-bags, in order to form some kind of screen. This manœuvre took some time, for he was anxious not to waken any one, and as he was standing up, he had to balance himself carefully, for the railway carriage jolted considerably. But at last he got it fixed, and he was just moving the lower corner of the screen, so that it should not be too close to her head, when, by some wild and fearful accident, the back of his hand happened to touch her hair. It was the lightest of touches; but it was like an electric shock; he paused, breathless; he was quite unnerved: he did not know whether to retreat or wait; it was as if something had stung him and benumbed his senses. And light as the touch was, it awoke her. Her eyes opened, and there was a sudden fear and bewilderment in them when she saw him standing over her; but the next second she perceived what he had been doing for her, and kindness and thanks were instantly his reward.

“Oh, thank you! thank you!” she said, with smiling eyes. And he was glad to get back into his own corner, and to think over this that had happened, and to wonder at the sudden fear that had paralyzed him. At all events, he had not offended her.

The dawn arose in the east, the cold clear blue giving way to a mystic gray; but still the moon shone palely on the palms and on the water and the silent plains. And still she slept; and he was wondering whether she was dreaming of the far north, and of the place that she longed to make a home of, if only for the briefest space. And what if this new day that was spreading up and up, and fighting the pallid moonlight, and bringing with it color and life to brighten the awaking world—what if this new day were to bring with it a new courage, and he were to hint to her, or even to tell her plainly that this pathetic hope of hers was of easy accomplishment, and that, after their stay at Allt-nam-Ba, if it grieved her to think of leaving the place that she had first thought to make a home of, there was another home there that would be proud and glad to welcome her, not for two months or for three months, but for the length of her life? Why should not Mr. Winterbourne be free to follow out his political career? He had gathered from Yolande that she considered herself a most unfortunate drag and incumbrance on her father:

was not this a happy solution of all possible difficulties? In black velvet, more especially, Yolande would look so handsome in the dining-room at Lynn Towers.

CHAPTER XIII.

INTERVENTION.

MRS. GRAHAM saw clearly before her the difficulties and danger of the task she had undertaken, and she approached it with much circumspection and caution. Time and an abundance of opportunities were on her side, however. Moreover, she and Yolande were like sisters now; and when the men-folk were smoking together in some other part of the dahabeeyah, and talking about public affairs or their chances of having a little shooting in the neighborhood of Merhadj, these two were most likely seated in the cool shade of the Belvedere, having a quiet and confidential chat all to themselves, the while the slow-moving panorama of the Nile stole stealthily by.

And gradually Mrs. Graham got Yolande to think a good deal about the future, which ordinarily the girl was loath to do. She had an admirable capacity for enjoying the present moment, so long as the weather was fine, and her father not a long way off. She had never experienced any trouble, and why should she look forward to any? She was in perfect health, and consequently her brain was free from morbid apprehensions. Sometimes, when Mrs. Graham was talking with the sadness begotten of worldly wisdom, the younger woman would laugh lightly, and ask what there was on earth to depress her—except, perhaps, the absence of dear Baby. In short, Yolande could not be made anxious about herself. She was content to take the present as it was, and the future as it might come. She was far more interested in watching the operations of this or that African kingfisher, when the big black and gray bird, after fluttering in the air for a while in the manner of a hawk, would swoop down and dive into the river, emerging with a small silver fish in its beak.

But if she could not easily be made anxious about her-

self, she very easily indeed could be made anxious about her father; and Mrs. Graham quickly discovered that anything suggested about him was instantly sufficient to arouse her interest and concern. She played upon that pipe skillfully, and yet with not the faintest notion that her siren music was anything but of the simplest and honestest kind. Was it not for the welfare and happiness of every one concerned? Even Jim, with his faculty for looking at the sardonic side of things, had not a word to say against it. It would be a very good arrangement, that oracle had declared.

"Do you know, dear," said she, one morning, to Yolande, "what Jim has just been saying?—that he would not be surprised if, sooner or later, your father were offered some place in the Government."

Yolande opened her eyes wide with surprise. But then she laughed, and shook her head.

"Oh no. It is impossible. He is not good friends with the Government. He has too many opinions to himself."

"I don't know," said pretty Mrs. Graham, looking at one of the little French mirrors, and smoothing her curls. "I don't know. You should hear Jim, anyway. Of course I don't mean a post with a seat in the Cabinet; but office of some kind—an Under-Secretaryship or something of that sort. Jim says he heard just before he left town that the Government were going to try to conciliate the Radicals, and that some member below the gangway would most likely be taken in. It would please some of the northern towns; and Slagpool is an important place."

"Oh, do you think it is possible?" cried the girl, with a new light in her eyes. "My papa in the Ministry—and always in town?"

"That's just it, Yolande dear," said Mrs. Graham. "If your papa were a member of the Government, in whatever place, he could not go gallivanting about like this—"

"Oh, of course not, certainly not," the girl said, eagerly. "He would live in London. He would have a house—a proper home. Do you think it is likely? I never heard of it before. But why should it not be?—why should it not be, dear Mrs. Graham? There are very few members in the House of Commons—why, scarcely any at all—who are returned by such a number of persons. Look at the majority he always has; does it not say that those people re

spect him, and believe he is working for the good of the country? Very well; why should it not be?"

"I quite agree with you; and Jim says it is not at all unlikely. But you are talking about a house, Yolande dear; well, it would scarcely be worth your papa's while to take a house merely for you; through it is certainly of importance for a member of the Government to have a town house, and entertain, and so forth. You could scarcely manage that, you know, my dear; you are rather young; but if your papa were to marry again?"

"Yes?" said Yolande, without betraying any dismay.

"In that case I have been wondering what would become of you," said the other, with her eyes cast down.

"Oh, that is all right," said the girl, cheerfully. "That is quite right. Madame has directed me to that once or twice—often; but not always with good sense, I consider. For it can not always happen that stepmother and stepdaughter do not get on well—if there is one who is very anxious to please. And if my papa were to marry again, it is not that I should have less of his society; I should have more; if there was a home, and I allowed to remain, I should have more. And why should I have anything but kindness for his wife, who gives me a home? Oh, I assure you it is not I who would make any quarrel."

"Oh no; I dare say not—I dare say not, Yolande dear," said the other, with a gracious smile. "You are not terribly quarrelsome. But it seldom answers. You would find yourself in the way. Sooner or later you would find yourself in the way."

"Then I would go."

"Where?"

The girl made a little gesture by turning out the palms of her hands ever so slightly.

"I will tell you, my dear child, of one place where you could go. If you came to us at Inverstroy—now or then, or at any time—there is a home there waiting for you; and Jim and I would just make a sister of you."

She spoke with feeling, and, indeed, with honesty; for she was quite ready to have welcomed Yolande to their northern home, wholly apart from the projects of the Master of Lynn. And Yolande for a second put her hand on her friend's hand.

"I know that," she, "and it is very kind of you to think of it; and I believe it true—so much so that, if there was

any need, I would accept it at once. And it is a very nice thing to think of ; that there are friends who would take you into their own home if there were need. Oh, I assure you, it is pleasant to think of, even when there is no need at all."

"Will you come and try it? Will you come and see how you like it?" said pretty Mrs. Graham, with a courageous cheerfulness. "Why not? Your papa wants to be back in time for the Budget, or even before that. They say that it will be a late session—that if they get away for the twelfth they will be lucky. Now you know, dear Yolande, between ourselves, your father's constituents are very forbearing. It is all very well for us to make a joke of it here ; but really—really—really—"

"I understand you very well," said Yolande, quickly ; "and you think he should remain in London till the twelfth, and always be at the House? Yes, yes ; that is what I think too. Do you imagine it is I who take him away on voyage after voyage? No! For me, I would rather have him always at the House. I would rather read his speeches in the newspaper than see any more cities, and cities, and cities."

"Very well ; but what are you going to do, Yolande dear, between the time of our getting back and the twelfth?"

"Oh," said Yolande, with her face brightening, "that will be a busy time—no more of going away—and I shall be all the time in the hotel in Albemarle Street—and papa and I dining together every night, and having a chat before he goes to the House."

"I am sure you are mistaken there," said Mrs. Graham, promptly. "Your father won't let you stay all that time in town. He hates the very name of town. He is too fond of you, too careful of you, Yolande dear, and too proud of the roses in your cheeks, to let you shut yourself up in a town hotel."

"But look at me!" the girl said, indignantly. "Do I look unwell? Am I sick-looking? Why should not I live in a town hotel as well as others? Are all unwell who live in London? No ; it is folly to say that. And if anything were likely to make me unwell, it is not living in London ; but it is the fretting, when I am away from London, that I can be of no use to my papa, and that he is living alone there. Think of his living alone in the hotel, and dining alone there—worse than that still, dining at the House of

Commons! Why, it was only last night Colonel Graham and he were speaking of the bad dinners there—the heat and the crush and the badly cooked joints—yes, and I sitting there, and saying to myself, ‘Véry well, and what is the use of having a daughter if she can not get for you a pretty dinner, with flowers on the table?’”

“I understand you so well; when you speak it is like myself thinking,” said Mrs. Graham, in her kindly way (and not at all imagining that she was anything of a hypocrite, or talking for a purpose); “but you may put it out of your head. Your father won’t let you stay in town. I know that.”

“Then I suppose it will be Oatlands Park,” said Yolande, with a bit of a sigh.

“No. Why should it?” said her friend, briskly. “Come to Inverstroy. Go back with us. Then we will see about the cook and the housemaid in Inverness; and Archie will get the dog-cart and horses for you; and we might even go down to Allt-nam-Ba, and see that the keeper has kept on fires during the winter, and that the lodge is all right. And then we will all go on to Inverstroy—Archie as well; and he will take you out salmon-fishing, for I shall have my own house to attend to for a while; but we will make you just one of the family, and you will amuse yourself just as you think best; and if we don’t pet you, and make you comfortable, and as happy as ever you were in your life, then my name isn’t Mary Graham. You will just see what a Highland welcome we will give you!”

“I know—I know,” said the girl. “How can I thank you for such kindness? But then to think of my papa being all that time left by himself in London——”

“My dear Yolande, I must speak frankly to you, even if you fancy it cruel. Don’t you imagine your father would stand a little better with his constituents, and consequently be more at ease in his own mind, if he were left by himself a little more than at present? Don’t you think it might be prudent? Don’t you think it would be better for every one if he were left a little freer?”

“Yes, yes—it is so—I can see it.”

“And if you were with us, he could give his whole time and attention to Parliament.”

“Yes, yes—though I had other wishes as well,” the girl said, with her lips becoming a little tremulous.

“It is a very awkward situation,” said Mrs. Graham,

with abundant cheerfulness ; “ but I see the natural way out of it. Perhaps you don’t, dear Yolande ; but I do. I know what will happen. You will have a house and home of your own ; and your father will be very glad to see you happy and settled ; and he will give proper attention to Parliament while Parliament is sitting ; but when Parliament is not sitting then he will come to you for relaxation and amusement. and you must have a salmon-rod ready for him in the spring, and in the autumn nice luncheons to be sent up the hill, where he will be with the others. Now isn’t that something to look forward to ? ”

“ Yes—but—a house of my own ? ” the girl said, bewildered.

“ Of course when you marry, my dear. That is the obvious solution of the whole difficulty : it will put every one in a proper position. ”

She said neither yea nor nay ; there was no affectation of maiden coyness ; no protest of any kind. But her eyes were distant and thoughtful ; not sad exactly, but seemingly filled with memories—probably memories of her own futile schemes and hopes.

That afternoon they came in sight of some walls and a minarat or two, half hidden by groves of palms lying along the high banks of the river ; and these they were told belonged to Merhadj ; but the Reis had had orders to moor the dehabeeyah by the shore at some short distance from the town, so that the English party should not be quartered among the confusion and squalor further along. The consequence of this was that very soon they found themselves the practical owners of a portion of Africa which seemed to be uninhabited ; for when the whole party got ashore (with much excitement and eager interest), and waded across the thick sand, and then entered a far-stretching wood of acacia-trees, they could find no trace of human occupation ; the only living things being an abundance of hoopoes—the beautiful red-headed and crested birds were so tame that one could have flung one’s cap at them—and wood-pigeons, the latter of a brilliant blue and gray and white. But by and by, as they wandered along—highly pleased to be on shore again, and grateful for the shelter of the trees—they met a slow procession of Arabs, with donkeys and camels, wending their way through the dry rushes and hot sand ; and as the animals were heavily laden, they made no doubt that the natives were carrying in farm produce to

sell at Merhadj. Then when they returned to the dahabeeyah, they found a note from Ismat Effendi, written in excellent English, saying that his father had just returned from the interior, and that they both would do themselves the honor of paying a visit the following morning.

But what to do till dinner-time—now that the dahabeeyah was no longer moving past the familiar features of the Nile? Ahmed came to the rescue. The *chef* was anxious to have some pigeons: would the gentlemen go ashore and shoot some for him? The gentlemen flatly refused to go and kill those half-tame creatures; but they discovered that Ahmed could shoot a little; so they lent him a gun, and offered to beat the wood for him. It was an occupation, at least. And so the two women were left by themselves again, with nothing before them but the choosing of a costume for dinner, and the donning of the same. ✓

It was an opportunity not to be missed; and yet Mrs. Graham was terribly nervous. She had an uncomfortable suspicion all day that she had not been quite ingenuous in her conversation of the morning; and she was anxious to confess and clear her mind, and yet afraid of the effects of her confession. But Yolande had spoken so reasonably and sensibly; she seemed to recognize the situation; why should she be startled?

For good or ill, she determined to plunge *in medias res*; and she adopted a gay air, though her fingers were rather shaky. She put her arm within Yolande's arm. They were slowly walking up and down the upper deck, under the awning. They could just see the gentlemen of the party, along with Ahmed, disappearing into the grove of dark green acacias.

"Yolande, I am a wicked woman," she said, suddenly. "Hear my confession. I was not quite frank with you this morning, and I can't rest till I have told you. The fact is, my dear child, when I spoke to you about the possibility of your marrying, I knew of the wishes of one or two others, and I ought to have told you. And now I wish to confess everything; and you will forgive me if I say anything to offend or alarm you—"

"About my marrying?" said the girl, looking rather frightened. "Oh no; I do not wish to know. I do not wish to know of anything that any one has said to you."

"Then you have guessed?"

The mere question was an intimation. The girl's face

flushed ; and she said, with an eager haste, and in obvious trouble :

“ Why should we speak of any such thing ? Dear Mrs. Graham, why should I be afraid of the future ? No ; I am not afraid.”

“ But there are others to be considered—one, at least, whose hopes have been clear enough to the rest of us for some time back. Dearest Yolande, am I am speaking too much now ? ”

She stood still, and took both of the girl's hands in hers.

“ Am I telling you too much ? Or am I telling you what you have guessed already ? I hope I haven't spoken too soon. If I have done anything indiscreet, don't blame *him* ! I could not talk to you just like sister to sister, and have this knowledge in the background, and be hiding it like a secret from you.”

Yolande drew her hands away ; she seemed scarcely able to find utterance.

“ Oh no, Mrs. Graham, it is a mistake, it is all a mistake ; you don't mean what you say—”

“ But indeed I do ! ” the other said, eagerly. “ Dearest Yolande, how can I help wishing to have you for a sister ? But if I have revealed the secret too soon, why, you must forget it altogether, and let Archie speak for himself. But you know I do wish it. I can't help telling you. I have been thinking of what we might be to each other up there in the Highlands ; for I never had a sister, and my mother died when I was quite young, like yours, dear Yolande. You can't tell how pleased I was when Archie began to—to show you attention ; and I made sure you must have seen how anxious he was to please you—”

She paused for a second here, but there was no answer : the girl was too bewildered.

“ Why, Jim would be like a big brother to you ; you can't tell how fond he is of you ; and your father approving too—”

The girl started as if she had been struck, and her face became quite white.

“ Did you say—that my father wished it ? ” she said, slowly.

“ Oh yes, oh yes,” Mrs. Graham said. “ What more natural ? What should he wish for more than to see you happily married ? I wouldn't say that he would be more free to attend to public affairs ; I wouldn't say that was

his reason, though it might be one of several reasons; but I can very well understand his being pleased at the notion of seeing you married and comfortably settled among people who would make much of you, as I really and truly think we should. Now, dear Yolande, don't say anything in haste. I am not asking you on behalf of Archie; I am telling you a secret to clear my own mind. Ah, and if you only knew how glad we should be to have you among us!"

The girl's eyes had slowly filled with tears, but she would not own it. She had courage. She looked her companion fair in the face, as if to say, "Do you think I am crying? I am not." But when she smiled, it was a very strange sort of smile, and very near crying.

"Then if it is a secret, let it remain a secret, dear Mrs. Graham," said she, with a sort of cheerfulness. "Perhaps it will always remain one, and no harm done. I did not know that my papa wished that; I did not suspect it. No: how could I? When we have talked of the years to come, that was not the arrangement that seemed best."

She paused for a while.

"Now I remember what you were saying in the morning. And you knew then also that my papa wished it?"

"Oh yes, certainly—not that he has spoken directly to me—"

But Yolande was scarcely listening. Rapid pictures were passing before her—pictures that had been suggested by Mrs. Graham herself. And Yolande's father, not her future husband, was the central figure of them.

Then she seemed to throw aside these speculations with an effort of will.

"Come," she said, more cheerfully, "is it not time to dress? We will put away that secret; it is just as if you had never spoken; it is all away in the air—vanished. And you must not tell your brother that you have been talking to me; for you know, dear Mrs. Graham, he has been very kind to me, and I would not give him pain—oh, not for anything—"

"My dear Yolande, if he thought there was a chance of your saying yes, he would be out of his senses with joy!" exclaimed the other.

"Oh, but that is not to be thought of!" said the girl, with quite a practical air. "It is not to be thought of at all as yet. My papa has not said anything to me. And a

little thinking between us two—what is that? Nothing—air—it goes away; why should we remember it?”

Mrs. Graham could not understand this attitude at all. Yolande had said neither yes nor no; she seemed neither elated or depressed; and she certainly had not—as most young ladies are supposed to do when they have decided upon a refusal—expressed any compassion for the unfortunate suitor. Moreover, at dinner, Mrs. Graham observed that more than once Yolande regarded the young Master of Lynn with a very attentive scrutiny. It was not a conscious, furtive scrutiny; it was calm and unabashed. And Mrs. Graham also noticed that when her brother looked up to address Yolande, and met her eyes, those eyes were not hastily withdrawn in maiden confusion, but rather answered his look with a pleased friendliness. She was certainly studying him, the sister thought.

CHAPTER XIV.

A SETTLEMENT.

NEXT morning there was much hurrying to and fro on board the dahabeeyah in anticipation of the visit of the Governor; so that Mrs. Graham had no chance of having an extended talk with her brother. Nevertheless, she managed to convey to him a few covert words of information and counsel.

“Archie,” said she, “I have spoken to Yolande—I have hinted something to her.”

“No!” he said, looking rather frightened.

“Oh, you need not be much alarmed,” she said, with a significant smile. “Rather the other way. She seems quite to know how you have wished to be kind and attentive to her—quite sensible of it, in fact; and when I hinted something—”

“She did not say ‘no’ outright?” he interrupted, eagerly; and there was a flush of gladness on his face.

His sister glanced around.

“I thought there could be no harm if I told her that Jim and I would like to have her for a sister,” she answered, demurely.

“And she did not say ‘no’ outright?” he repeated.

“Well,” Mrs. Graham said, after a second, “I am not going to tell you anything more. It would not be fair. It is your business, not mine. I’m out of it now. I have intermeddled quite enough. But I don’t think she hates you. And she seems rather pleased to think of living in the Highlands, with her father having plenty of amusement there, you know; and perhaps she might be brought to consider a permanent arrangement of that kind not so undesirable; and—and—well, you’d better see for yourself. As I say, Jim and I will be very glad to have her for a sister; and I can’t say more, can I?”

She could not say more then, at all events, for at this moment Colonel Graham appeared on the upper deck with the intelligence that the Governor’s barge was just then coming down the river. Mr. Winterbourne and Yolande were instantly summoned from below; some further disposition of chairs and divans was made; some boxes of cigarettes were sent for; and presently the sound of oars alongside announced the arrival of the chief notables of Merhadj.

The Master of Lynn saw and heard little of what followed; he was far too busy with the glad and bewildering prospect that his sister’s obscure hints had placed before him. And again and again he glanced at Yolande, timidly, and yet with an increasing wonder. He began to ask himself whether it was really true that his sister had spoken to her. The girl betrayed no consciousness, no embarrassment; she had greeted him on that morning just as on other mornings; at this moment she was regarding the arrival of those grave officials with an interest which seemed quite oblivious of his presence. As for him, he looked on impatiently. He wished it was all over. He wished to have some private speech with her, to have some inquiry of her eyes—surely her eyes would make some telltale confession? And in a vague kind of way he grew to think that the Governor’s son, Ismat Effendi, who was acting as interpreter, and who spoke English excellently, addressed a little too much of the conversation to the two ladies. Moreover, it was all very well for him, on coming on board, to shake hands with Mrs. Graham, for he had known her in India, but why with Yolande?”

The Governor—a corpulent and sallow-faced old gentleman who looked like a huge frog—and his companions sat in solemn state, while young Ismat, with much grace of

manner and remarkably eloquent eyes, hoped that the visitors were comfortable on board the dahabeeyah, and so forth. He was a well-dressed young gentleman; his black frock-coat, white waistcoat, and red tarboosh were all of the newest and smartest, and his singularly small feet were incased in boots of brilliant polish. The Master of Lynn considered him a coxcomb, and also a Frenchified semi-theatrical coxcomb. But the women-folk liked his pleasant manners and his speaking eyes; and when he said that he had never been to England, but intended to go the next year, Mrs. Graham made him definitely promise that he would pay them a visit at Inverstroy.

"And Miss Winterbourne," said the young gentleman with the swarthy face and the brilliant white teeth, "does she live in Scotland also?"

"Well, no," said Mrs. Graham, placidly; "but I hope you will find her there when you come. We want her to go back with us when we go back; and if she likes her visit, perhaps she will come again. I hope you will find her with us."

"And I also, madam, hope to have the felicity of the visit that you propose," said he, "if politics will permit me."

He directed an inquiring and rather curious glance at Colonel Graham.

"You did not hear anything very remarkable in Cairo, sir?"

"Well, nothing remarkable," said the stout soldier. "Lots of rumors. Alway plenty of that in politics. Mostly lies. At the Consulate they thought we were safe enough."

The young man turned to his father, who was silently and solemnly sipping his coffee, apparently quite uninterested in what was going on, and spoke in Arabic to him for a second or two. The old gentleman appeared to grunt assent.

"My father says he will have much delight in sending two or three soldiers to accompany your party if you are making excursions into the interior. There is no danger, except that some bad men will try to rob when they can. Or if you will permit me—if you will have the grace to permit me—I will accompany you myself."

"But to take up so much of your time—" said pretty Mrs. Graham, with one of her most pleasant smiles.

He waved his hand in a deprecatory fashion.

“It will be too charming for me. Perhaps your dragoon does not know the district as well as I. Do you permit me? Shall I come to-morrow, with everything prepared?”

“Look here, Mr. Ismat,” said Colonel Graham, “you’d better come along and dine with us this evening; then we can talk it over. In the meantime we can’t keep your father and the other gentlemen waiting while we discuss our rambles. Will you please tell his Excellency once more how much obliged we are, and honored by his visit, and that we will do ourselves the pleasure of coming to see him at Merhadj to-morrow if that will suit his Excellency’s convenience?”

This was the final arrangement—that young Ismat Effendi was to come along to dinner in the evening—a prospect which seemed to please him highly. Very soon after the grave company was seated in the stern of the barge, and the big oars were once more at work. The dahabeeyah returned to its normal state of silence; the little party of Europeans were left again to their own society; and the Master of Lynn, a little anxious and excited, and almost fearing to meet Yolande’s eyes, and yet drawn toward her neighborhood by a secret spell, declined to go ashore with the other two gentlemen, and remained with his sister and Yolande in the Belvedere, in the cool shade of the canvas awning.

No, she betrayed not the slightest embarrassment at his sitting thus quite near her; it was he who was nervous and awkward in his speech. She was engaged in some delicate needlework; from time to time she spread it out on her lap to regard it, and all the time she was chatting freely with Mrs. Graham about the recent visitors and their grave demeanor, their almost European costume, their wonderfully small feet, and so forth.

“Why do you not go ashore?” she said, turning with frank eyes to the Master of Lynn. “It is so interesting to see the strange birds, the strange plants.”

“It is cooler on the river,” said he.

He was wondering whether his sister would get up and go away and leave them together, and he was half afraid she would and half afraid she would not. But at all events he was now resolved that on the first opportunity he would speak to Yolande himself. He would not trust to any go-between. Was it not enough that she had had some in-

timation made to her of his wishes and hopes, and yet showed no signs of fear at his approach?

The midday went by, and he found no chance of addressing her. His sister and she sat together, and sewed and chatted, or stopped to watch some passing boat, and listen to the boatmen singing a long and melancholy chorus to the clanking of the oars. At lunch-time Mr. Winterbourne and Colonel Graham turned up. Then in the afternoon the whole of them got into a boat, and were rowed away to a long and flat and sandy island on the other side of the Nile, which they explored in a leisurely way; and then back again to the dahabeeah for a draught of cold tea in the welcome shade of the awning.

It was not until near the end of the day that the long-looked-for opportunity arrived: indeed, nearly every one had gone below to get ready for dinner; but Yolande had lingered above to watch the coming over of the twilight. It was a strange enough sight in its way. For after the yellow color had died out of the bank of bearded corn above the river's edge, and while the strip of acacia-trees over that again had grown solemn and dark against the clear, pallid, blue-gray sky of the south, far away in the northwestern heavens there still lingered a glow of warmer light, and a few clouds high up had caught a saffron tinge from the sinking sun. It seemed as if they here were shut in with the dark, while far away in the north, over the Surrey lanes, and up among the Westmoreland waters, and out amid the distant Hebrideen isles, the summer evening was still fair and shining. It led one to dream of home. The imagination took wings. It was pleasant to think of those beautiful and glowing scenes, here where the gloom of the silent desert was gathering all around.

She was standing by the rail of the deck; and when the others had gone he quietly went over to her, and began talking to her—about the Highlands mostly, and of the long clear twilights there, and how he hoped she would accept his sister's invitation to go back home with them when they returned to England. And when she said something very pretty about the kindness of all of them to her, he spoke a little more warmly, and asked if there was any wonder. People got to know one another intimately through a constant companionship like this, and got to know and admire and love beautiful qualities of disposition and mind. And then he told her it would not be honest if

he did not confess to her that he was aware that his sister had spoken to her—it was best to be frank; and he knew she was so kind she would not be angry if there had been any indiscretion; and he begged for her forgiveness if she had been in any way offended. He spoke in a very frank and manly way; and she let him speak, for she was quite incapable of saying anything. Her fingers were working nervously with a small pocket-book she held, and she had turned partly away, dreading to lift her eyes, and yet unable to go until she had answered him somehow. Then she managed to say, rather hurriedly and breathlessly,—

“Oh no, I am not offended. Why, it is—a great honor—I—I knew it was your sister’s kindness and friendship that made her speak to me. Please let me go away now—”

He had put his hand on her arm unwittingly.

“But may I hope, Yolande? May I hope?” he said and he stooped down to listen for the faintest word. “I don’t want you to pledge yourself altogether now. Give me time. May I try to win you? Do you think sometimes—some time of your own choosing, as far ahead as you may wish—you will consent? May I hope for it? May I look forward to it—some day.

“Oh, but I cannot tell you—I cannot tell you now,” she said, in the same breathless way. “I am sorry if I have given any pain—any anxiety—but—some other time I will try to talk to you—or my papa will tell you—but not now. You have always been so kind to me that I ask it from you—”

She stole away in the gathering darkness, her head bent down: she had not once turned her eyes to his. And he remained there for a time, scarcely knowing what he had said or what she had answered, but vaguely and happily conscious that she had not, at all events, refused him. Was it not much? He was harassed by all kinds of doubts, surmises, hesitations; but surely prevailing over these was a buoyant hope, a touch of triumph even. He would fain have gone away for a long stroll in the dusk to have reasoned out his hopes and guesses with himself; but here was dinner-time approaching, and young Ismat was coming; and he—that is, the Master of Lynn—began to have the consciousness that Yolande in a measure belonged to him, and that he must be there. He went down the steps with a light and a proud heart. Yolande was his, he almost felt

assured. How should she regard him when next they met?

And indeed at dinner there was no longer any of that happy serenity of manner on her part that had puzzled him before. Her self-consciousness and embarrassment were so great as to be almost painful to witness. She never lifted her eyes; she ate and drank next to nothing; when she pretended to be listening to Ismat Effendi's descriptions of the troubles in the Soudan, any one who knew must have seen that she was a quite perfunctory listener, and probably understood but little of what was being said. But then no one knew that he had spoken but himself, and he strove to convince her that he was not regarding her by entering eagerly into this conversation about the False Prophet; and though now and again her trouble and confusion perplexed him—along with the recollection that she had been so anxious to say nothing definite—still, on the whole, triumph and rejoicing were in his heart. And how beautiful she looked, even with the pensive face cast down! No wonder young Ismat had admired her that morning; the very Englishness of her appearance must have struck him—the tall stature, the fine complexion, the ruddy golden hair, and the clear, proud, calm, self-confident look of the maidenly eyes. This was a bride fit for a home-coming at Lynn Towers!

But, alas! Yolande's self-confidence seemed to have strangely forsaken her that evening. When they were all up on deck, taking their coffee in the red glow shed by the lanterns, she got hold of her father, and drew him aside into the darkness.

"What is it, Yolande?" said he, in surprise.

She took hold of his hand; both hers were trembling.

"I have something to tell you, papa—something serious."

Then he knew, and for a moment his heart sank; but he maintained a gay demeanor. Had he not reasoned the whole matter out with himself? He had foreseen this crisis; he had nerved himself by anticipation.

"Oh, I know—I know already, Yolande," said he, very cheerfully. "Do you think I can't spy secrets? And of course you come to me, with your hands trembling, and you think you have something dreadful to confess, whereas it is nothing but the most ordinary and commonplace thing in the world. You need not make any confession. Young

Leslie has spoken to me. Quite right—very right; I like frankness. I consider him a very fine young fellow. Now what have you got to say? Only I won't listen if you are going to make a fuss about it, and destroy my nervous system, for I tell you it is the simplest and most ordinary affair in the world."

"Then you know everything—you approve of it, papa—it is your wish?" she said, bravely.

"My wish?" he said. "What has my wish to do with it, you stupid creature!" But then he added, more gently: "Of course you know Yolande, I should like to see you married and settled. Yes, I should like to see that; I should like to see you in a fixed home, and not liable to all the changes and chances of the life that you and I have been living. It would be a great relief to my mind. And then it is natural and right. It is not for a young girl to be a rolling stone like that; and, besides, it couldn't last: that idea about our always going on travelling wouldn't answer. So whenever you think of marrying, whenever you think you will be happy in choosing a husband—just now, tomorrow, or any time—don't come to me with a breathless voice, and with trembling hands, as if you had done some wrong, or as if I was going to object, for to see you happy would be happiness enough for me; and as for our society together, well, you know, I could pay the people of Slagpool a little more attention, and have some more occupation that way; and then you, instead of having an old and frail and feeble person like me to take care of you, you would have one whose years would make him a fitter companion for you, as is quite right and proper and natural. And now do you understand?"

"Oh yes, I think so, papa!" said she, quite brightly; and she regarded him with grateful and loving eyes. "And you would have ever so much more time for Parliament, would you not?"

"Assuredly."

"And you would come to see me sometimes; and go shooting and fishing; and take a real holiday—not in towns and hotels?"

"Oh, don't be afraid. I will bother the life out of you. And there are always fishings and shootings to be got somehow,"

"And you would be quite happy then?"

"If you were, I should be," said he; and really this

prospect pleased him so much that his cheerfulness now was scarcely forced. "Always on this distinct and clear understanding," he added, "that, when we are coming back from the shooting, you will come out to meet us and walk back with us the last half-mile."

"I should be dressing for dinner, papa," she said, "and just worrying my head off to think what would please you."

"You will be dressing to please your husband, you foolish creature, not me."

"He won't care as much as you, papa." Then she added, after a second: "I should get the London newspapers, yes? Quite easily? Do you know, papa, what Colonel Graham believes?—that they are going to take one of the extreme Liberals into the Ministry, to please the northern towns."

"But what has that got to do with you, child?" said he, with a laugh. "Very likely they may. But you didn't bring me over here to talk politics?"

"But even if you were in the Government, papa, you would have your holiday-time all the same," she said, thoughtfully.

"I a member of the Government!" said he. "You may as well expect to hear of me being sent to arrest the False Prophet in the Soudan. Come away, then, Yolande: your secret is not a secret; so you need not trouble about it; and now, that I have expounded my views on the situation, you may as well go and call to Ahmed that I want another cup of coffee."

And then he hesitated.

"You have not said yes or no yet, Yolande?"

"Oh no; how could I, until I knew what you might think?" said she, and she regarded him now with frank and unclouded eyes. "How could I? It might not have been agreeable to your wishes. But I was told that you would approve. At first—well, it is a sudden thing to give up visions you have formed: but when you see it is not practicable and reasonable, what is it but a small struggle? No; other plans present themselves. Oh yes, I have much to think of now, that looks very pleasant to anticipate. Very much to look forward to—to hope for."

He patted her lightly on the shoulder.

"And if you make half as good a wife, Yolande, as you have been a daughter, you will do pretty well."

They went back to their friends, their absence scarcely having been noticed, for Ismat Effendi was a fluent and interesting talker. And whether Mr. Winterbourne had been playing a part or not in his interview with Yolande, that cheerfulness of his soon left him. He sat somewhat apart, and silent; his eyes were fixed on the deck; he was not listening. Yolande herself brought him the coffee; and she put her hand on his shoulder, and stood by him; then he brightened up somewhat. But he was thoughtful and distraught for the whole of the evening, except when he happened to be spoken to by Yolande and then he would summon up some of his customary humor, and petulantly complain about her un-English idioms.

And she? Her anxiety and nervousness seemed to have vanished. It is true, she rather avoided the Master of Lynn, and rarely ventured to look in his direction, but she was in good spirits, cheerful, practical, self-possessed; and when Ismat Effendi, on going away, apologized to her for having talked tedious politics all the evening, she said, with a charming smile,—

“No, not at all. How can politics be tedious? Ah! but we will have our revenge, perhaps, in Scotland. Mrs. Graham says that in their house it is nothing but deer that is talked of all the evening. That will not interest you?”

“I shall rejoice to be allowed to try,” said the polite young Egyptian; and then he shook hands with her, and bowed very low, and left.

During the rest of the evening the Master of Lynn, seeing that Yolande seemed no longer in any trouble, kept near her, with some vague hope that she would herself speak, or that he might have some chance of re-opening the subject that engrossed his mind. And indeed, when the chance arrived, and he timidly asked her if she had not a word of hope for him, she spoke very frankly, though with some little nervousness, no doubt. She made a little apology, in very pretty and stammering phrases, for not having been able to give him an answer; but since then, she said, she had spoken to her father, without whose approval she could not have decided.

“Then you consent, Yolande; you will be my wife?” he said, in a low and eager voice, upsetting in his haste all the continuity of these hesitating sentences.

“But is it wise?” said she, still with her eyes cast down. “Perhaps you will regret—”

He took her hand in his, and held it tight.

"This has been a lucky voyage for me," said he ; and that was all that he had a chance of saying just then ; but it was enough.

Colonel Graham heard the news that same evening. He was a man of solid and fixed ideas.

"A very good thing too," said he to his wife. "A very good thing. Now they'll take the sheep off Allt-nam-Ba, and make Corrievreak the sanctuary. Nothing could have happened better."

CHAPTER XV.

NEW PLANS.

NEXT morning, and long before any one on board the dahabeeyah was awake, Mr. Winterbourne was seated in the quiet little saloon writing the following letter :

"NEAR MERHADJH, ON THE NILE, *May 13.*

"DEAR SHORTLANDS :—

I have news for you. You will be glad to learn that Yolande is engaged to be married—I think with every prospect of happiness ; and you will also be glad to know that I heartily approve, and that so far from viewing the coming change with dread, I rather welcome it, and look on it as the final removal of one of the great anxieties of my life. Sometimes I wonder at myself, though. Yolande and I have been so much to each other. And I dare say I shall feel her absence for a while. But what does it matter ? My life has been broken and wasted ; what remains of it is of little consequence if her life be made the fuller and happier and more secured ; and I think there is every chance of that. After all, this definite separation will be better than a series of small separations, haunted by continual fears. She will be removed from all the possibilities you know of. As for me, what does it matter, as I say ? And so I have come to regard the handing over of my Yolande to somebody else as not such a hard matter after all ; nay, I am looking forward to it with a kind of satisfaction. When I can see her securely married and happily settled in a home,

that will be enough for me ; and maybe I may have a chance from time to time of regarding the pride and pleasure of the young house-mistress.

“The accepted suitor is Mrs. Graham’s brother (I think you know we came away with Colonel Graham, of Inverstry, and his wife), and the only son of Lord Lynn. I have had a good opportunity of studying his character ; and you may imagine that, when I saw a prospect of this happening, I regarded him very closely and jealously. Well, I must say that his qualities bore the scrutiny well. I think he is an honest and honorable young fellow, of fair abilities, very pleasant and courteous in manner (what I especially like in him is the consideration and respect he pays to women, which seems to be unusual nowadays ; he doesn’t stand and stare at them with a toothpick in his mouth) ; I hear he is one of the best deer-stalkers in the Highlands, and that speaks well for his hardihood and his temperance ; he is not brilliant, but he is good-natured, which is of more importance in the long run ; he is cheerful and high-spirited, which naturally follows from his excellent constitution—deer-stalking does not tend to congestion of the liver and bilious headache : he is good-looking, but not vain ; and he is scrupulously exact in money matters. Indeed, he is almost too exact, if criticism were to be so minute, for it looks just a little bit odd, when we are playing cards for counters at threepence a dozen, to see the heir of the house of Lynn so very particular in claiming his due of twopence-halfpenny. But this little weakness is forgivable : to be prudent and economical is a very good failing in a young man ; and then you must remember his training. The Leslies have been poor for several generations ; but they have steadily applied themselves to the retrieving of their condition and the bettering of the estate, and it is only by the exercise of severe economy that they now stand in so good a position. So, doubtless, this young fellow has acquired the habit of being particular about trifles, and I don’t object ; from my point of view it is rather praiseworthy ; Yolande’s fortune—and she shall have the bulk of what I have—will be placed in good and careful hands.

“So now all this is well and happily settled, and as every one bids fair to be content, you will ask what more we have to do than to look forward to the wedding, and the slippers, and the handfuls of rice. Well, it is the old story, and you as an old friend, will understand. That is

why I write to you, after a wakeful enough night—for the sake of unburdening myself, even though I can't get a word of your sturdy counsel at this great distance. As I say, it is the old story. For the moment you delude yourself into the belief that the time of peril and anxiety is past; everything is safe now for the future; with Yolande's life made secure and happy, what matters what happens elsewhere? And the next moment new anxieties present themselves; the old dread returns; doubts whether you have acted for the best, and fears about this future that seemed so bright. There is one point about these Leslies that I forgot to mention: they are all of them apparently—and young Leslie especially—very proud of the family name, and jealous of the family honor. I do not wonder at it. They have every right to be, and it is rather a praiseworthy quality. But now you will understand, old friend, the perplexity I am in—afraid to make any revelation that might disturb the settlement which seems so fortunate a one, and yet afraid to transfer to the future all those risks and anxieties that have made the past so bitter and so terrible to me. I do not know what to do. Perhaps I should have stated the whole matter plainly to the young man when he came and asked permission to propose to Yolande; but then I was thinking, not of that at all, but only of her happiness. It seemed so easy and safe a way out of all that old trouble. And why should he have been burdened with a secret which he dared not reveal to her? I thought of Yolande being taken away to that Highland home, living content and happy all through her life, and it did not occur to me to imperil that prospect by any disclosure of what could concern neither her nor him. But now I have begun to torture myself in the old way again, and in spite of myself conjure up all sorts of ghastly anticipations. The fit does not last long; if you were here, with your firm way of looking at things, possibly I could drive away these imaginings altogether; but you will understand me when I say that I could wish to see Yolande married to-morrow, and carried away to the Highlands. Then I could meet my own troubles well enough."

He was startled by the rustling of a dress; he looked up, and there was Yolande herself, regarding him with a bright and happy and smiling face, in which there was a trifle of surprise, and also perhaps a faint flush of self-consciousness; for it was but the previous evening that she had told him of

the engagement. But surely one glance of that face, so young and cheerful and confident, was enough to dispel those dark forebodings. The page of life lying open there was not the one on which to write down prognostications of trouble and sorrow. His eyes lit up with pleasure; the glooms of the night were suddenly forgotten.

"Writing? Already?" she said, as she went forward and kissed him.

"You are looking very well this morning, Yolande," he said, regarding her. "The silence of the boat does not keep you from sleeping, apparently, as it sometimes does with older folk. But where is your snood?—the color suits your hair,"

"Oh, I am not in the Highlands yet," she said, lightly. "Do you know the song Mrs. Graham sings?—

'Tis I would give my silken snood
To see the gallant Grahams come hame,'

that was in the days of their banishment."

"But what have you to do with the home-coming of the Grahams, Yolande?" her father said, to tease her. "You will be a Leslie, not a Graham."

She changed the topic quickly.

"To whom are you writing?"

"To John Shortlands."

"May I see?"

She would have taken up the letter had he not hastily interposed.

"No."

"Ah! it is about business. Very well. But may I put in a postscript?"

"What do you want to write to Mr. Shortlands about?" her father said, in amazement.

"Perhaps it will be better for you to write, then. I was going to ask him to visit us at Allt-nam-Ba."

"Well, now, Yolande, that is a most excellent idea!" he exclaimed. "You are really becoming quite a sensible and practical person. We shall want another gun. John Shortlands is just the man."

"We can give him," said she, sedately, "the bedroom over the dining-room; that will be furthest away from the noise of the kennels."

Then he stared at her.

“What on earth do you know about the bedroom over the dining-room, or the kennels either?”

“Mr. Leslie,” said she, with a momentary flush, “gave me a plan of the house—there it is, papa. Oh, you shall have no trouble; it is all quite easily arranged.”

She took out a piece of paper from her note-book, unfolded it, and put it before him.

“There,” said she, with a practical air, “is a very good room, that looks down the glen—that is for you. That one is for a visitor—yes, Mr. Shortlands, if he will come—so that he shall not be disturbed by the dogs. That one for me—”

“But why should you be disturbed by the dogs?”

“Me? Oh, no! I shall be used to it. Besides,” she said, with a laugh, “there is nothing that will disturb me—no, not the cockatoo at the Chateau that Madame did not keep more than three days.”

“But look here, Yolande,” said he, gravely, “I am afraid you are going to attempt too much. Why should you? Why should you bother? I can pay to get somebody to do all that. It’s all very well for Mrs. Graham, who has all her servants about her, trained to help her. And she has been at the thing for years. But really, Yolande, you are taking too great a responsibility. And why should you worry yourself when I can pay to get it done? I dare say there are people who will provision a house as you provision a yacht, and take back the surplus stores. I don’t know; I suppose so. In any case I hire a housekeeper up there—”

She put her hand on his mouth.

“No, no, no,” she said, triumphantly. “Why, it is all arranged, long ago—all settled—every small point. Do I not know what cartridges to buy for you, for the rifle that Mr. Leslie is to lend you—do I not know even that small point?”

She referred to her note-book.

“There it is,” she said. “Eley-Boxer, 500 bore, for express rifle—”

“Well, you know, Yolande,” said he, to test her, “I should have thought that when the Master proposed to lend me a rifle, he might have presented me with some cartridges, instead of letting me buy them for myself.”

But she did not see the point.

“Perhaps he did not remember,” said she, lightly. “Perhaps it is not customary. No matter; I shall have

them. It is very obliging that you get the loan of the rifle. *Quand on emprunte, on ne choisit pas.*"

"Very well, then; go away, and let me finish my letter," said he, good-naturedly.

When she had gone he turned the sheet of paper that he had placed face downward, and continued:—

"When I had written the above Yolande came into the saloon. She has just gone, and everything is changed. It is impossible to look at her—so full of hope and life and cheerfulness—and be downcast about the future. It appears to me now that whatever trouble may befall will affect me only, and that that does not much matter, and that she will be living a happy life far away there in the north without a care. Is it not quite simple? She will no longer bear my name. Even if she were to come to London—though it is far from probable they will ever have a London house, even for the season—she will come either as the Hon. Mrs. Leslie, or as Lady Lynn; and nothing could occur to alarm her or annoy her husband. Everything appears to have happened for the best, and I don't see how any *contretemps* could arise. When we return to England the proposal is that Yolande should go on with the Grahams to Inverstroy, until I go down to a shooting that I have rented for the season from Lord Lynn—Allt-nam-Ba is the name of the place—and there we should be for the following three months. I don't know how long the engagement of the young people is likely to last; but I should say they knew each other pretty well after being constantly in each other's society all this time; and I, of course, could wish for nothing better than a speedy marriage. Nor will there be any risk about that. Whether it takes place in the Highlands, or at Weybridge, or anywhere else, there need be no great ceremony or publicity; and I would gladly pay for a special license, which I could fairly do on the plea that it was merely a whim of my own.

"Now as for yourself, dear old boy. Would you be surprised to hear that Yolande has just suggested—entirely her own suggestion, mind—that you should come and pay us a visit at that shooting-box? She has even decided that you are to have the bedroom farthest removed from the noise of the kennels. I do hope you will be able to go down with me for the Twelfth. With decent shooting, and if the moor is in its normal state, they say we should get 1000 or 1200 brace; and, besides that, the moor abuts on

three deer forests, and there is no reason, moral or legal, why you shouldn't have a shot at such *feræ naturæ* as may stray on to your ground. And then (which is, perhaps, a more important thing—at all events, you would be interested, for I think you rather like the child) you would see what kind of a choice Yolande has made. I hope I am not blinded by my own wishes; but it seems as if everything promised well.

“There is another thing I want to mention to you before I close this screed—which more resembles the letters of our youth than the *staccato* notes they call letters nowadays. I have talked to you about this engagement as if it were a good arrangement—a solution, in fact, of a very awkward problem; but don't think for a moment that, when they do marry, it will be anything but a marriage of affection. Mr. Leslie is not so poor that he need to marry for money; on the contrary, the family are fairly well off now, and the estates almost free; and Yolande, on the other hand, is not the sort of creature to marry for title or social position. I saw that he was drawing toward her a long time ago—as far back, indeed, as the time of our arriving at Malta; and as for her, she made a friend and companion of him almost at the beginning of the voyage in a way very unusual with her; for I have noticed again and again, in travelling, how extremely reserved she was when any one seemed anxious to make her acquaintance. No doubt the fact that he was Mrs. Graham's brother had something to do with it; for the Grahams were very kind to her at Oatlands, and have been ever since, I need hardly say. It will be very pleasant to her to have such agreeable neighbors when she marries. Mrs. Graham treats her like a sister already. She will not be going among strange kinsfolk, nor among those likely to judge her harshly.

“So far we have enjoyed the trip very well, though, of course, to some of us its chief interest lay in this little drama that now points, I hope, to a happy conclusion. We have had the whole Nile to ourselves—all the tourists gone long ago. The heat considerable: yesterday at midday it was 108 degrees in the shade; but it is a dry heat, and not debilitating. Of course we keep under shelter on the hottest days. I hear that the wine at dinner is of a temperature of 90 degrees, there being no ice; so that we abstainers have rather the best of it, the water, kept in porous jars, being much cooler than that. We visit

Merhadj to-day, and thereafter begin a series of excursions in the neighborhood—if all goes well. But we heard some ugly rumors in Cairo, and may at any moment have to beat a swift retreat.

“As soon as I get back I shall begin my Parliamentary attendance again, and stick close to work until the end of the session, and I have no doubt the Government will give me plenty of chances of reminding the Slagpool people of my existence. I wish you would have a paragraph put in one of the London papers to the effect that the health of the member for Slagpool being now almost re-established by his visit to Egypt, he will in a few weeks be able to take his place again in the House. Then the Slagpool papers would copy. They have been very forbearing with me, those people; I suppose it is because I bully them. They would have turned out any more complaisant person long ago.

“Yolande—still harping on his daughter, you will say; but it is only for a little while: soon I shall see and hear little enough of her—has undertaken the whole control and household management of the shooting-box, and I dare say she will make a hash of it; but I don't think you will be severe on her, if, as I hope, you can come to us. It will be an occupation and amusement for her while she is in the Highlands; and I am very glad she is going to be with the Grahams during that interval. She wearied a good deal at Oatlands Park, though she tried not to show it; and as for ever having her in London again—no, that is impossible. Mrs. Leslie or Lady Lynn may come and live in London when she pleases—though I hope it may be many a year before she does so—but not Yolande Winterbourne. Poor child, she little knows what kind of a shadow there is behind her fair and bright young life. I hope she will never know; I am beginning to believe now that she will never know; and this that has just happened ought to give one courage and strength.

“Do not attempt to answer this letter. The writing of it has been a relief to me. I may be back in town very shortly after you get it; for we shall only stay in Cairo a few days to get some things for Yolande that may be of service to her after.

Always your friend,

“G. R. WINTERBOURNE.

“P.S.—I should not wonder at all if, before this letter

gets posted even, that torment of fear and nervous apprehension should again get possession of me. I wish the marriage were well over, and I left alone in London."

The various noises throughout the dahabeeyah now told him that all the people were stirring; he carefully folded this letter and put it in his pocket (that he might read it over again at his leisure), and then he went out and up the stairs to the higher deck. Yolande was leaning with her elbows on the rail, gazing out on the wide waters and the far wastes of sand. She did not hear him approach; she was carelessly singing to herself some snatch of a French song, and doubtless not thinking at all how inappropriate the words were:

" Ohé! . . . c'est la terre de France
 Ohé! . . . Garçons! bonne espérance!
 Vois-tu, là-bas, sous le ciel gris
 A l'horizon? . . . C'est le pays!
 Madelon, Perine
 Toinon, Catherine—"

"Yolande," said he; and she started and turned round quickly.

"Why, you don't seem to consider that you have taken a very serious step in life," he said, with a smile.

"Moi?"

Then she recalled herself to her proper tongue.

"I think it pleases every one; do you not?" she said, brightly; and there were no more forebodings possible when he found himself, as now, face to face with the shining cheerfulness of her eyes.

CHAPTER XVI.

OBEDIENCE.

YOLANDE was right on that one point, at least: every one seemed greatly pleased. There was a new and obvious satisfaction permeating all through this little party in exile. Mrs. Graham was more affectionate than ever—it was "dear Yolande" every other minute; Colonel Graham was as-

siduous in giving her perfectly idiotic advice about her housekeeping at Allt-nam-Ba; and the Master of Lynn sought, but sought in vain, for opportunities of having little confidential talks with her. And the most light-hearted of them all was Yolande herself. Her decision once given, she seemed to trouble herself no more about the future. Every one was pleased; so was she. She betrayed no concern; she was not embarrassed by that increase of attention and kindness which, however slight, was easily recognizable and significant. To all appearance she was occupied, not in the least with her future duties as a wife, but solely and delightedly with preparations for the approaching visit to Merhadj; and she was right thankful that they were going by water, for on two occasions they had found the sand of the river-bank to be of a temperature of 140° in the sun, which was not very pleasant for women-folk wearing thin-soled boots.

When they had got into the stern of the big boat, and were being rowed up the wide, yellow-green river, her father could not help regarding this gayety of demeanor with an increasing wonder, and even with a touch of apprehensive doubt. And then again he argued with himself. Why should she anticipate the gravities of life? Why should she not be careless and light-hearted, and happy in the small excitement of the moment? Would it not be time to face the evil days, if there were to be any such, when they came? And why should they come at all? Surely some lives were destined for peace. Why should not the story of her life be like the scene now around them—placid, beautiful, and calm, with unclouded skies? To some that was given, and Yolande (he gradually convinced himself) would be one of those. To look at her face—so full of life and pleasure and bright cheerfulness—was to acquire hope; it was not possible to associate misery or despair with those clear-shining, confident eyes. Her life (he returned to the fancy) was to be like the scenery in which the courtship and engagement passage of it had chanced to occur—pretty, placid, unclouded, not too romantic. And so by the time they reached Merhadj he had grown to be, or had forced himself to appear, as cheerful as any of them. He knew he was nervous, fretful, and liable to gloomy anticipations; but he also had a certain power of fighting against these, and that he could do best when Yolande was actually beside him. And was she not there now—merry and laughing

and delighted ; eagerly interested in these new scenes, and trying to talk to every one at once ? He began to share in her excitement ; he forgot about those vague horoscopes it was the crowd of boats, and the children swimming in the Nile, and the women coming down with pitchers on their heads, and all the other busy and picturesque features along the shore that he was looking at, because she also was looking at them ; and it was no visionary Yolande of the future, but the very sensible and practical and light-hearted Yoland of that very moment, that he had to grip by the arm with an angry remonstrance about her attempting to walk down the gangboard by herself, she only laughed ; she never believed much in her father's anger.

They got ashore to find themselves in the midst of a frightful tumult and confusion—at least so it appeared to them after the silence and seclusion of the dahabeeyah. Donkeys were being driven down to the river, raising clouds of dust as they came trotting along ; the banks swarmed with mules and camels and water-carriers, the women were filling their pitchers, the boys their pigskin vessels ; the children were diving and splashing and calling ; and altogether the bustle and clamor seemed different enough from the ordinary repose of Eastern life, and were even a trifle bewildering. But in the midst of it all appeared young Ismat Effendi, who came hurrying down the bank to offer a hundred eager apologies for his not having been in time to receive them ; and under his guidance they got away from the noise and squalor, and proceeded to cross a large open square, planted with a few acacia-trees, to the Governor's house just outside the town. The young Ismat was delighted to be the escort of those two English ladies. He talked very fast ; his eyes were eloquent ; and his smiling face showed how proud and pleased he was. And would they go through the town with him after they had done his father the honor of a visit ?

“The bazars are not like Cairo,” said he. “No, no ; who could expect that ? We are a small town, but we are more Egyptian than Cairo ; we are not half foreign, like Cairo.”

“I am sure it will be all the more interesting on that account,” said Mrs. Graham, graciously ; and Yolande was pleased to express the same opinion ; and young Ismat Effendi's face seemed to say that a great honor had been conferred on him and on Merhadj.

And indeed they were sufficiently interested in what they could already see of the place—this wide sandy square, with its acacias in tubs, its strings of donkeys and camels, its veiled women and dusky men; with the high bare walls of a mosque, the tapering minaret, some lower walls of houses, and everywhere a profusion of palms that bounded the further side.

“Hillo, Mr. Ismat!” called out Colonel Graham, as two gangs of villanous-looking convicts, all chained to each other, came along under guard of a couple of soldiers. “What have these fellows been doing?”

“They are prisoners,” said he, carelessly. “They have killed somebody or stolen something. We make them carry water.”

The next new feature was a company of soldiers, in white tunics and trousers and red tarbooshes, who marched quickly along to the shrill sharp music of bugles. They disappeared into the archway of a large square building.

“That is my father’s house,” explained young Ismat to the ladies. “He looks to your visit with great pleasure. And the other gentlemen of the town, they are there also, and the chief engineer of the district. Your coming is a great honor to us.”

“I wish I knew a little Arabic,” said Mrs. Graham. “I am sure we have not thanked his Excellency half enough for his kindness in lending us his dahabeeyah.”

“Oh, quite enough, quite enough,” said the polite young Egyptian. “I assure you it is nothing. Though it is a pity my father does not understand English, and not much French either. He has been very busy all his life, and not travelling. The other gentlemen speak French, like most of the official Egyptians.”

“And you,” said Mrs. Graham, regarding him with her pretty eyes, “do you speak French as well as you speak English?”

“My English!” he said, with a slight shrug of his shoulders. “It is very bad. I know it is very, very bad. I have never been in England; I have had no practice except a little in India. But, on the contrary, I have lived three years in Paris; French is much more natural to me than English.”

“It is so with me also, Mr. Ismat,” said Yolande, a trifle shyly.

“With you!” he exclaimed.

“I have lived nearly all my life in France. But your English, that you spoke of is not in the least bad. It is very good—is it not Mrs. Graham?”

Nothing further could be said on that point, however for they were just escaping from the glare of the sun into a cool high archway; and from that they passed into a wide, open courtyard, where the guard of soldiers they had seen enter presented arms. Then they ascended some steps, and finally were ushered into a large and lofty and barely furnished saloon, where the Governor and the notables of Merhadj received them with much serious courtesy. But this interview, as it turned out, was not quite so solemn as that on the deck of the dahabeeyah; for, after what Ismat Effendi had said to the two ladies without, it was but natural that the conversation should be conducted in French; and so the coffee and cigarettes which were brought in by two young lads were partaken of in anything but silence. And then, as little groups were thus formed, and as Ismat's services as interpreter were not in such constant demand, he somehow came to devote himself to the two ladies, and as Yolande naturally spoke French with much more ease and fluency than Mrs. Graham, to her he chiefly addressed himself. The Master of Lynn did not at all like this arrangement. He was silent and impatient. He regarded this Frenchified Arab, who seemed to consider himself so fascinating, with a goodly measure of robust English contempt. And then he grew angry with his sister. She ought not to be, and she ought not to permit Yolande to be, so familiar with this Egyptian fellow. Did she not know that Egyptian ladies studiously kept their faces concealed? And what must he be thinking of these two English ladies, who laughed and chattered in this free and easy fashion?

Then, as regarded Yolande, his gratitude for the great gift she had given him was still full in his mind, and he was willing to make every excuse for her, and to treat her with a manly forbearance and leniency; but at the same time he could not get rid of a certain consciousness that she did not seem to recognize as she ought that he had in a way, a right of possession. She bore herself to him just as she bore herself to the others; if there was any one of the party whom she seemed specially to favor that morning as they came up the Nile, it was Colonel Graham, who did nothing but tease her. She did not seem to think there was any difference between yesterday and to-day, whereas yesterday

she was free, and to day she was a promised bride. However, he threw most of the blame on his sister. Polly was always trying the effect of her eyes on somebody, and this Egyptian was as good as another. And he wondered how Graham allowed it.

But matters grew worse when this ceremonious interview was over. For when they went to explore the narrow, twisting, mud-paved, and apparently endless bazars of Merhadj, where there was scarcely room for the camels and donkeys, to pass without bumping them against the walls or shop doors, of course they had to go two and two; and as young Ismat had to lead the way, and as he naturally continued to talk to the person with whom he had been talking within it fell out that Yolande and he were the first pair, the others following as they pleased. Once or twice the Master struggled forward through the crowd and the dust and the donkeys, and tried to detach Yolande from her companion; but in each case some circumstance happened to intervene, and he failed; and the consequence was that, bringing up the rear with Mr. Winterbourne, who was not a talkative person, he had abundant leisure to nurse his wrath in silence. And he felt he had a right to be angry, though it was not perhaps altogether her fault. She did not seem to understand that there were relations existing between engaged people different from those existing between others. He had acquired a certain right: so, in fact, had she; for he put it to himself whether, supposing he had had the chance of walking through those miserable little streets of Merhadj with the prettiest young Englishwoman who ever lived, he would have deserted Yolande for her side. No, he would not. And he thought that he ought to remonstrate; and that he would remonstrate; but yet in a kindly way, so that no offence could be taken. It would be no offence, surely, to beg from her just a little bit more of her favor.

Meanwhile, this was the conversation of those two in front, as they slowly made their way along the tortuous, catacomb looking throughfare, with its dusky little shops, in the darkness of each of which sat the merchant, cross-legged, and gazing impassively out from under his large white turban.

“What is it, then, you wish?” he was saying to her; and he spoke in French that was much more idiomatic, if not any more fluent, than his English. “Curiosities? Bric-a-brac?”

“It is something very Eastern, very Egyptian, that I could send to the ladies at the Chateau where I was brought up,” she said, as she attentively scanned each gloomy recess. “And also I would like to buy something for Mrs. Graham—a little present—I know not what. Also for my papa. Is there nothing very strange—very curious !”

“But, alas ! mademoiselle,” said he, “we have here no manufactures. Our business of the neighborhood is agriculture. All these articles in the bazar are from Cairo ; we have not even any of the Assiout pottery, which is pretty and curious, but perhaps not safe to carry on a long journey. The silver jewelry is all from Cairo ; those silks from Cairo also ; those cottons from England.”

“At Cairo, then, one could purchase some things truly Egyptian ?”

“Certainly—certainly, mademoiselle, you will find the bazars at Cairo full of interest. Ah, I wish with all my heart I could accompany you !”

“That would be to encroach entirely too much on your goodness,” said she with a pleasant smile.

“Not at all,” said he, earnestly. “Ah, no ; not at all. It is so charming to find one’s self for a time in new society ; and if one can be of a little assistance, that is so much the better. There is also something I would speak to monsieur your father about mademoiselle, before you return to the dahabeeyah. I have arranged one or two excursions for you, which may interest you perhaps ; and the necessary means are all prepared ; and I think it might be of advantage to begin these at once. There is no danger—no, no ; there is no cause for any alarm ; but always of late the political atmosphere has been somewhat disturbed ; and if you were at Cairo you would find out better what was going to happen then we ourselves do here. Then as you have said, you would wish to buy some things ; and you will have need of plenty of time to go through the bazars—”

He seemed to speak with a little caution at this point.

“I have heard the gentlemen speak of it,” said she, with no great concern, for she was far from being a nervous person ; “but they seemed to think there was no danger.”

“Danger ? No, no,” said he. “For you there can be no danger. But if there is political disquiet and disturbance, it might not be quite agreeable for you ; and that is all I wish to say to monsieur your father, that he would have the goodness to make the excursions as soon as possible, and so

leave more time for judging the situation. It is a hint—it is a suggestion—that is all.”

“I am sure that my papa and Colonel Graham will do whatever you think best,” said she.

“You are very good, mademoiselle. I wish to serve them,” said he, with grave courtesy.

Well, not only did this young man—whether intentionally or not it was impossible to say—monopolize Yolande’s society during the remainder of their exploration of Merhadj, but, furthermore, on their embarking in their boat to return, he accepted an invitation to dine with them that same evening; and the Master of Lynn was determined that, before young Ismat put foot on board the dahabeeyah. Yolande would be civilly but firmly requested to amend her ways. It was all very well for his sister, who was a born flirt, to go about making great friends with strangers; and it was all very well for Colonel Graham, who was too lazy to care about anything, to look on with good-humored indifference. But already this audacious youth had begun to pose Yolande as an exalted being. She knew nothing about garrison life in India.

He had very considerable difficulty in obtaining a private conversation with Yolande, for life on board the dahabeeyah was distinctly public and social; but late on in the afternoon he succeeded.

“So, Yolande,” said he, with an artful carelessness, “this has been the first day of our engagement.”

“Oh yes,” said she, looking up in a pleasant way.

“We haven’t seen much of each other,” he suggested.

“Ah, no; it has been such a busy day. How much nicer is the quiet here, is it not?”

“But you seemed to find Ismat Effendi sufficiently amusing,” he said, somewhat coldly.

“Oh yes,” she answered, quite frankly. “And so clever and intelligent. I hope we shall see him when he comes to England.”

“I thought,” said he, “that in France young ladies were brought up to be rather reserved—that they were not supposed to become so friendly with chance acquaintances.”

Perhaps there was something in the tone that caused her to look up, this time rather seriously.

“I should not call him a chance acquaintance,” she said, slowly. “He is the friend of Colonel Graham, and of papa,

and of yourself." And then she added, speaking still slowly and still regarding him, "Did you think I was not enough reserved?"

Well, there was a kind of obedience in her manner—a sort of biddableness in her eyes—that entirely took the wind out of the sails of his intended reproof.

"You see, Yolande," said he, in a much more friendly way, "perhaps it was mere bad luck; but after getting engaged only last night, you may imagine I wanted to see a little of you to-day; and you can't suppose that I quite liked that Egyptian fellow monopolizing you the whole time. Of course I am not jealous—and not jealous of that fellow!—for jealousy implies suspicion; and I know you too well. But perhaps you don't quite understand that people who are engaged have a little claim on each other, and expect to be treated with a little more intimacy and friendliness than as if they were outsiders."

"Oh yes, I understand," she said, with her eyes cast down.

"Of course I am not complaining," he continued, in the most amiable way. "It would be a curious thing if I were to begin to complain now, after what you said last night. But you can't wonder if I am anxious to have all your kindness to myself, and that I should like you and me to have different relations between ourselves than those we have with other people. An engagement means giving up something on both sides, I suppose. Do you think I should like to see you waltzing with any one else now? It isn't in human nature that I should like it."

"Then I will not waltz with any one," she said, still looking down.

"And I don't think you will find me a tyrannous sort of person, Yolande," said he with a smile, "even if you were inclined to make an engagement a much more serious matter than you seem to consider it. It is more likely you who will prove the tyrant; for you have your own way with everybody, and why not with me too? And I hope you understand why I spoke, don't you? You don't think it unkind?"

"Oh no, I quite understand," she said, in the same low voice.

Ismat Effendi came to dinner, as he had promised. She spoke scarcely a word to him the whole evening.

CHAPTER XVII.

A CHAT IN THE DESERT.

"ARCHIE," said his sister, on one occasion, in rather a significant tone, "you will have some trouble with papa."

They were on their way to visit a convent some few miles inland, and the only thing that varied the monotony of the journey was the occasional stumbling of the wretched animals they rode. He glanced round to see that the others were far enough off, then he said, either carelessly or with an affectation of carelessness,—

"I dare say. Oh yes, I have no doubt of it. But there would have been a row in any case, so it does not matter much. If I had brought home the daughter of an archangel he would have growled and grumbled. He gave you a pretty warm time of it, Polly, before he let you marry Graham."

And then he said, with more vehemence,—

"Hang it all, my father doesn't understand the condition of things nowadays! The peerage isn't sacred any longer; you can't expect people to keep on intermarrying and intermarrying, just to please Burke. We can show a pretty good list, you know, and I wouldn't add any name to it that would disgrace it; but that craze of my father's is all nonsense. Why, the only place nowadays where a lord is worshipped and glorified is the United States; that's where I should have gone if I had wanted to marry for money; I dare say they would have found out that sooner or later I should succeed to a peerage. Of course my father is treated with great respect when he goes to attend meetings at Inverness; and the keepers and gillies think he is the greatest man in the kingdom; but what would he be in London? Why, there you find governing England a commoner, whose family made their money in business; and under him—and glad enough to take office too—noblemen whose names are as old as the history of England—"

His sister interrupted him.

"My dear Master," said she, "please remember that because a girl is pretty, her father's politics are not neces

sarily right. If you have imbibed those frightful sentiments from Mr. Winterbourne, for goodness' sake say nothing about them at the Towers. The matter will be difficult enough without that. You see, with anybody else, it might be practicable to shelve politics, but Mr. Winterbourne's views and opinions are too widely known; and you will have quite enough difficulty in getting papa to receive Mr. Winterbourne with decent civility, without your talking any wild Radicalism in that way."

"Radicalism?" said he. "It is not Radicalism. It is common-sense, which is just the reverse of Radicalism. However, what I have resolved on is this, Polly: his lordship shall remain in complete ignorance of the whole affair until Yolande goes to Allt-nam-Ba. Then he will see her. That ought to do something to smooth the way. There is another thing, too. Winterbourne has taken Allt-nam-Ba, and my father ought to be well disposed to him on that account alone."

"Because a gentleman rents a shooting from you for one year—"

"But why one year?" he interposed, quickly. "Why shouldn't Winterbourne take a lease of it? He can well afford it. And with Yolande living up there, of course he would like to come and see her sometimes; and Allt-nam-Ba is just the place for a man to bring a bachelor friend or two with him from London. He can well afford it. It is his only amusement. It would be a good arrangement for me too; for I could lend him a hand; and the moor wants hard shooting, else we shall be having the disease back again some fine day. Then we should continue to let the forest."

"And where are you and Yolande going to live, then?" said his sister, regarding him with a curious look. "Are you going to install her as mistress of the Towers?"

"Take her to Lynn!" he said, with a scornful laugh. "Yes, I should think so! Cage her up with that old cat, indeed!"

"She is my aunt as well as yours, and I will not have her spoken of like that," said Mrs. Graham, sharply.

"She is my aunt," said this young man; "and she is yours; and she is an old cat as well. Never mind, Polly. You will see such things at Lynn as your small head never dreamed of. The place has just been starved for want of money. You must see that when you think of Inverstroy;

look how well everything is done there. And then, when you consider how we have been working to pay off scores run up by other people—that seems rather hard, doesn't it ?

“I don't think so—I don't think so at all!” his sister said, promptly. “Our family may have made mistakes in politics; but that was better than always truckling to the winning side. We have nothing to be ashamed of. And you ought to be very glad that so much of the land remains ours,”

“Well, you will see what can be made of it,” her brother said, confidently. “I don't regret now the long struggle to keep the place together; and once we get back Corrievreak, we'll have the watershed for the march again.”

His face brightened up at this prospect.

“That will be something, Polly?” he said, gayly. “What a view there is from the tops all along that march! You've got the whole of Inverness-shire spread out around you like a map. I think it was £8000 my grandfather got for Corrievreak; but I suppose Sir John will want £15,000. I know he is ready to part with it, for it is of little use to him; it does not lie well with his forest. But if we had it back—and with the sheep taken off Allt-nam-Ba—”

“Jim says you ought to make Corrievreak the sanctuary,” his sister remarked; and indeed she seemed quite as much interested as he in these joyful forecasts.

“Why, of course. There couldn't be a better—”

“And I was saying that if you planted the Rushen slopes, and built a good large comfortable lodge there, you would get a far better rent for the forest, You know it isn't like the old days, Archie: the people who come from the south now, come because it is the fashion; and they must have a fine house for their friends—”

“Yes, and hot luncheons sent up the hill, with champagne glasses and table napkins!” said he. “No more biscuits and a flask to last you from morning till night. The next thing will be a portable dining-table that can be taken up into one of the corries; and then they will have finger-glasses, I suppose, after lunch. No matter. For there is another thing, my sweet Mrs. Graham, that perhaps you have not considered: it may come to pass that, as time goes on, we may not have to let the forest at all. That would be much better than being indebted to your tenant for a day's stalking in your own forest.”

And then it seemed to strike him that all this planning and arranging—on the basis of Yolande's fortune—sounded just a little bit mercenary.

"To hear us talking like this," said he, with a laugh, "any one would imagine that I was marrying in order to improve the Lynn estate. Well, we haven't quite come to that yet, I hope. If it were merely a question of money, I could have gone to America, as I said. That would have been the market for the only kind of goods I've got to sell. No. I don't think any one can bring that against me."

"I, for one, would not think of accusing you of any such things," said his sister, warmly. "I hope you would have more pride. Jim was poor enough when I married him."

"Now if I *were* marrying for money," said he—and he seemed eager to rebut this charge—"I would have no scruples at all about asking Yolande to go and live at Lynn. Of course it would be a very economical arrangement. But would I? I should think not. I wouldn't have her shut up there for anything. But I hope she will like the house, as a visitor, and get on well with my father and my aunt. Don't you think she will produce a good impression? What I hope for most of all is that Jack Melville may take a fancy to her. That would settle it in a minute, you know. Whatever Melville approves, that is right—at the Towers or anywhere else. It's his cheek, you know. He believes in himself, and everybody else believes in him. It isn't only at Gress that he is the dominie. 'He is a scholar and a gentleman'—that is my beloved auntie's pet phrase, as if his going to Oxford on the strength of the Ferguson scholarship made him an authority on the right construction of a salmon ladder."

"Is that the way you speak of your friends behind their back?"

"Well, he jumps upon me considerably," said he, frankly: "and I may as well take it out of him when he is at Gress and I am in Egypt. No matter. If he takes a fancy to Yolande it will be all right. That is how they do with cigars and wines in London—'specially selected and approved by Messrs. So-and-so.' It is a guarantee of genuine quality. And so it will be 'Yolande Winterbourne, approved by Jack Melville, of Monaglen, and forwarded on to Lynn Towers.'"

"If that is all, that can be easily managed," said his

sister, cheerfully. "When she is with us at Inverstroy we will take her over to call on Mrs. Bell."

"I know what Mrs. Bell will call her—I know the very phrase: she will say, 'She is a bonnie doo, that.' The old lady is rather proud of the Scotch she picked up in the south."

"She ought to be prouder of the plunder she picked up further south still. She 'drew up wi' glaiket Englishers at Carlisle Ha' to some purpose."

"Yes; and Jack Melville will have every penny of it; and a good solid nest-egg it must be by this time. I am certain the old lady has an eye on Monaglen. What an odd thing it would be if Melville were to have Monaglen handed over to him just as we were getting back Corrievreak! I think there are some curious changes in store in that part of the world."

At this point Mrs. Graham pulled up her sorry steed, and waited until the rest of the cavalcade came along.

"Yolande dear," said she, in a tone of remonstrance, "Why don't you come on in front, and get less of the dust?"

Yolande did as she was bid.

"I have been so much interested," said she, brightly. "What a chance it is to learn about Afghanistan and Russia—from one who knows, as Colonel Graham does! You read and read in Parliament; but they all contradict each other. And Colonel Graham is quite of my papa's opinion."

"Well, now, the stupidity of it!" said pretty Mrs. Graham, with an affected petulance. "You people have been talking away about Afghanistan, and Archie and I have been talking away about the Highlands—in the African desert. What is the use of it? We ought to talk about what is around us."

"I propose," said the Master of Lynn. "that Yolande gives us a lecture on the antiquities of Karnac."

"Do you know, then, that I could?" said she. "But not this Karnac. No; the one in Brittany. I lived near it at Auray, for a long time, before I was taken to the Chateau."

"My dear Yolande," exclaimed Mrs. Graham, "if you will tell us about yourself, and your early life and all that, we will pack off all the mummies and tombs and pillars that ever existed."

"But there is no story at all, except a sad one," said the girl. "My uncle was a French gentleman—ah, so kind

he was!—and one day in the winter he was shot in the woods when he and the other gentlemen were out. Oh, it must have been terrible when they brought him home—not quite dead! But they did not tell me; and perhaps I was too young to experience all the misery. But it killed my aunt, who had taken me away from England when my mother died. She would not see any one; she shut herself up; then one morning she was found dead; and then they sent for my father, and he took me to the ladies at the Chateau. That is all. Perhaps if I had been older I should have understood it more, and been more grieved; but now, when I look back at Auray and our living there, I think mostly of the long drives with my aunt, when my uncle was away at the chase, and often and often we drove along the peninsula of Quiberon, which not every one visits. And was it a challenge, then,” she added, in a brighter way, “about a lecture on Karnac? Oh, I can give you one very easily. For I have read all the books about it, and I can give you all the theories about it, each of which is perfectly self-evident, and all of them quite contradictory, Shall I begin? It was a challenge.”

“No, Yolande, I would far rather hear your own theory,” said he, gallantly.

“Mine? I have not the vanity.” she said, lightly. “But this is what all the writers do not know, that besides the long rows of stones in the open plains—oh, hundreds and thousands, so thick that all the farmhouses and the stone walls have been built of them besides these, all through the woods, wherever you go, you come upon separate dolmens, sometimes almost covered over. My aunt and I used to stop the carriage, and go wandering through the woods in search; and always we thought these were the graves of pious people who wished to be buried in a sacred place—near where the priests were sacrificing in the plain—and perhaps that their friends had brought their bodies from some distant land.”

“Just as the Irish kings were carried to Iona to be buried,” said the Master.

“But, Yolande dear,” said Mrs. Graham, who was more interested in the story of Yolande’s youth than in Celtic monuments, “how did you come to keep up your English, since you have lived all your life in France?”

“But my aunt spoke English, naturally,” said she. “Then at the Chateau one of the ladies also spoke it—oh, I

assure you, there was no European language she did not speak, nor any country she did not know, for she had been traveling companion to a noble lady. And always her belief was that you must learn Latin as the first key."

"Then did you learn Latin, Yolande?" the Master of Lynn inquired, with some vague impression that the question was jocular, for Yolande had not revealed any traces of erudition.

"If you will examine me in Virgil, I think I shall pass," said she; "but in Horace—not at all. It is distressing the way he twists the meaning about the little short lines, and hides it away; I never had patience enough for him. Ah, there is one who does not hide his meaning, there is one who can write the line that goes straight and sounding and majestic. You have not to puzzle over the meaning when it is Victor Hugo who recounts to you the story of *Ruy Blas*, of *Cromwell*, of *Angelo*, of *Hernani*. That is not the poetry that is made with needles."

Mrs. Graham was scarcely prepared for this declaration of faith.

"My dear Yolande," said she, cautiously, "Victor Hugo's dramas are very fine; but I would not call them meat for babes. At the Chateau, now—"

"Oh, they were strictly forbidden," she said, frankly. "Madame would have stormed if she had known. But we read them all the same. Why not? What is the harm? Every one knows that there is crime and wrong in the world; why should one shut one's eyes?—that is folly. Is it not better to be indignant that there should be such crime and wrong? If there is any one who takes harm from such writing, he must be a strange person."

"At all events, Yolande," said he, "I hope you don't think that all kings are scoundrels, and all convicts angels of light! Victor Hugo is all very well, and he thunders along in fine style; but don't you think he comes awfully near being ridiculous? He hasn't much notion of a joke, has he? Don't you think he is rather too portentously solemn?"

Well, this inquiry into Yolande's opinions and experiences—which was intensely interesting to him, and naturally so—was eliciting some odd revelations; for it now appeared that she had arrived at the conclusion that the French, as a nation, were a serious and sombre people.

"Do you not think so?" she said, with wide eyes. "Oh,

I have found them so grave. The poor people in the fields, when you speak to them and they answer, it is always with a sigh; they look sad and tired; the care of work lies heavily on them. And at the Chateau, also, everything was so serious and formal; and when we paid visits there was none of the freedom, the amusement, the good-humor, of the English house. Sometimes, indeed, at Oatlands, at Weybridge, and once or twice in London, when my papa has taken me to visit, I have thought the mamma a little blunt in her frankness—in the expectation you would find yourself at home without any trouble on her part; but the daughters—oh, they were always very kind, and then so full of interest, about boating, or tennis, or something like that—always so full of spirits, and cheerful—no, it was not in the least like a visit to a French family. In France, how many years is it before you become friends with a neighbor? In England, if you are among nice people, it is—to-morrow. You, dear, Mrs. Graham, when you came to Oatlands, what did you know about me? Nothing.”

“Bless the child, had I not my eyes?” Mrs. Graham exclaimed.

“But before two or three days you were calling me by my Christian name.”

“Indeed I did,” said Mrs. Graham; “if it is a Christian name, which I doubt. But this I may suggest to you, my dear Yolande, that you don’t pay me a compliment, after the friendship you speak of, and the relationship we are all hoping for, in calling me by my married name. The name of Polly is not very romantic—”

“Oh, dear Mrs. Graham, I couldn’t!” said Yolande, almost in affright.

“Of course not,” said the pretty young matron, with one of her most charming smiles. “Of course you couldn’t be guilty of such familiarity with one of my advanced age. But I suppose Jim is right; I am getting old. Only he doesn’t seem to consider that a reason for treating me with any increasing respect.”

“I am sure I never thought of such a thing,” Yolande protested, almost in a voice of entreaty. “How could you imagine it?”

“Very well. But if you consider that ‘Polly’ is not in accordance with my age or my serious character as a mother and a wife, there is a compromise in ‘Mary,’ which indeed, was my proper name until I fell into the

hands of men. I used always to be called Mary, until Archie and Jim began with their impertinence. And when we are in the Highlands together, you know, and you are staying with us at Inverstroy, or we are visiting you at Allt-nam-Ba, or when we are all together at the Towers, whatever would the people think if they heard you call me 'Mrs. Graham?' They would think we had quarrelled."

"Then you are to be my sister Mary?" said Yolande, placidly; but the Master of Lynn flushed with pleasure when he heard that phrase.

"And I will be your champion and protectress when you come into our savage wilds in a way you can't dream of," continued pretty Mrs. Graham. "You don't know how we stand by each other in the highlands. We stand up for our own; and you will be one of us in good time. And you haven't the least idea what a desperate person I am when my temper is up—though Jim would, tell you he knows. Well, now, I suppose that is the convent over there, behind those palms; and we have been chattering the whole way about the Highlands, and Victor Hugo, and I don't know what; and I haven't the least idea what we are going to see or what we have to do."

But here the dragoman came up to assume the leadership of the party, and the Master of Lynn allowed himself to be eclipsed. He was not sorry. He was interested far less in the things around him than in the glimpses he had just got of Yolande's earlier years; and he was trying to place these one after another, to make a connected picture of her life up till the time that this journey brought him and her together. Could anything be more preoccupying than this study of the companion who was to be with him through all the long future time? And already she was related to him; she had chosen his sister to be hers.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A PHRASE.

BUT these idle wanderings of theirs in Upper Egypt were destined to come to a sudden end. One evening they were coming down the river, and were about to pass Merhadj, when they saw young Ismat Effendi putting off

in another boat, evidently with the intention of intercepting them. They immediately ordered their boat to be pulled in to the shore; and as Ismat said he wanted to say something to them, they stepped on board his father's dahabeeyah, and went into the saloon, for the sake of coolness.

Then the bright-faced young Egyptian, who seemed at once excited and embarrassed, told them, in his fluent and oddly phrased English, that he was much alarmed, and that his alarm was not on account of any danger that might happen to them, but was the fear that they might think him discourteous and inhospitable.

"Who could think that?" said pretty Mrs. Graham, in her sweetest way.

"Of course not. What's the matter?" said her husband, more bluntly.

Then young Ismat proceeded to explain that the latest news from the capital was not satisfactory; that many Europeans were leaving the country; that the reports in the journals were very contradictory; and that, in short, no one seemed to know what might not happen. And then he went on to implore them, if he suggested that they ought to return to Cairo, and satisfy themselves of their safety by going to the English Consulate there, not to imagine that he wished them to shorten their visit, or that his father desired to dispossess them of the dahabeeyah. "How could that be," he said, quite anxiously, "when here was another dahabeeyah lying idle? No; the other dahabeeyah was wholly at their service for as long as they chose; and it would be a great honor to his father, and the highest happiness to himself, if they were to remain at Merhadj for the longest period they could command; but was he not bound, especially when there were two ladies with them, to let them know what he had heard, and give them counsel?"

"My dear fellow, we understand perfectly," said Colonel Graham, with his accustomed good-humor. "And much obliged for the hint. Fact is, I think we ought to get back to Cairo in any case; for these women-folk want to have a turn at the bazars, and by the time they have half ruined us, we shall just be able to get along to Suez to catch the *Ganges*—"

"We must have plenty of time in Cairo," said Mrs. Graham, emphatically.

"Oh yes," said he. "Never mind the danger. Let

them buy silver necklaces, and they won't heed anything else. Very well, Mr. Ismat, come along with us now and have some dinner, and we can talk things over. We shall just be in time."

"May I?" said the young Egyptian to Mrs. Graham. "I am not intruding?"

"We shall be delighted if you will come with us," said she, with one of her most gracious smiles.

"It will not be pleasant for me when you go," said he. "There is not much society here."

"Nor will you find much society when you come to see us at Inverstroy, Mr. Ismat," she answered. "But we will make up for that by giving you a true Highland welcome: shall we not, Yolande dear?"

Yolande was not in the least embarrassed. She had quite grown accustomed to consider the Highlands as her future home.

"I hope so," she said, simply. "We are not likely to forget the kindness Mr. Ismat has shown to us."

"Oh, mademoiselle!" said he.

Now this resolve to go back to Cairo, and to get along from thence in time to catch the P. and O. steamer *Ganges* at Suez, was hailed with satisfaction by each member of the little party, though for very different reasons. Mr. Winterbourne was anxious to be at St. Stephen's before the Budget; and he could look forward to giving uninterrupted attention to his Parliamentary duties, for Yolande was going on to Inverstroy with the Grahams. Yolande herself was glad to think that soon she would be installed as house-mistress at Allt-nam-Ba; she had all her lists ready for the shops at Inverness; and she wanted time to have the servants tested before her father's arrival. Mrs. Graham, of course, lived in the one blissful hope of seeing Baby again; while her husband was beginning to think that a little salmon-fishing would be an excellent thing. But the reason the Master of Lynn had for welcoming this decision was much more occult.

"Polly," he had said to his sister on the previous day, "do you know, your friend Miss Yolande—"

"My friend!" she said, staring at him.

"She seems more intimate with you than with any one else, at all events," said he. "Well, I was going to say that she takes things pretty coolly."

"I don't understand you."

"I say she takes things very coolly," he repeated. "No one would imagine she was engaged at all."

"Are you complaining of her already?"

"I am not complaining; I am stating a fact."

"What is wrong then? Do you want her to go about proclaiming her engagement? Why, she can't. You haven't given her an engagement ring yet. Give her her engagement ring first and then she can go about and show it."

"Oh, you know very well what I mean. You know that no one cares less about sentimentality and that sort of thing than I do; I don't believe in it much; but still—she is just a trifle too business-like. She seems to say: 'Did I promise to marry? Oh, very well; all right, when the time comes. Call again to-morrow.' Of course my idea would not be to have a languishing love-sick maiden always lolloping at your elbow; but her absolute carelessness and indifference—"

"Oh, Archie, how can you say such a thing! She is most friendly with you—"

"Friendly! Yes; so she is with Graham. Is it the way they bring up girls in France?—to have precisely the same amount of friendliness for everybody—lovers, husbands, or even other people's husbands. It is convenient, certainly; but things might get mixed."

"I wonder to hear you," said Mrs. Graham, indignantly. "You don't deserve your good fortune. The fact is, Yolande Winterbourne happens to have very good health and spirits, and she is naturally light-hearted; whereas you would like to have her sombre and mysterious, I suppose; or perhaps it is the excitement of lovers' quarrels that you want. Is that it? Do you want to be quarrelling and making up again all day long? Well, to tell you the truth, Archie, you haven't hit on the right sort of girl. Now *Shena Van* would have suited you; she has a temper that would have given you amusement—"

"Leave Miss Stewart alone," he said, roughly. "I wish there were many woman in the world like her: if there are, I haven't met them."

"Yolande is too good for you."

"So she seems to think, at all events."

"Why don't you go and quarrel with her, then? What is the use of coming and talking over the matter with me?"

"With her? It wouldn't interest her. She would rather talk about the price of coals, or the chances of the Irish getting Home Rule—anything but what ought to be the most important event in her life."

"Archie," said his sister, who did not attach too much seriousness to these temporary moods of disappointment, "if papa finds out that Mr. Winterbourne is half inclined, and more than half inclined, to favor Home Rule, he will go out of his senses."

"Let him go out of his senses," said her brother, with deliberate indifference. "I suppose the worst that could happen would be the breaking off of the match."

But this possibility, involving the destruction of all her beautiful plans and dreams of the future, instantly awoke her alarm; and her protest was emphatic.

"Archie," said she, regarding him sternly, "I beg you to remember that you are expected to act as a gentleman."

"I don't know what you mean," he said.

"I will tell you, plain enough. You have asked this girl to be your wife; she has accepted you; your engagement has been made known; and I say this, that if you were to throw her over—I don't care for what reason—you would stamp yourself as a coward. Is that plain? A girl may be allowed to change her mind—at least she sometimes does, and there is not much said against her; but the man who engages himself to a girl, and allows the engagement to be known and talked about, and then throws her over, I say is a coward, neither more nor less. And I don't believe it of you. I don't believe you would allow papa or any one else to interfere, now the thing is settled. The Leslies are not made of stuff like that."

"That is all very well"—he was going to urge; but the impetuous little woman would have her say.

"What is more, I honor her highly for her reserve. There is nothing more disgusting than to see young people dawdling and fondling in the presence of others. You don't want to be Jenny and Jock going to the fair, do you?"

"Look here, Demosthenes" he said calmly. "You are as good as any one I know at drawing a herring across the scent; but you are perfectly aware all the time of what I mean."

This somewhat disconcerted her.

"Well I am—in a way," she said; and her tone was now

rather one of appeal. "But don't you see what life on board this boat is? It is all in the open. You can not expect any girl to be confidential when you have scarcely ever a chance of talking to her by herself. You must make allowances, Archie. I do know what you mean but—but I don't think you are right; and I, for one, am very glad to see her so light-hearted. You may depend on it, she hasn't sacrificed any one else in order to accept you. Her cheerfulness promises very well for the future—that is my idea of it; it shows that she is not thinking of somebody else, as girls sometimes do, even after they are engaged. Of course it isn't the girl's place to declare her sentiments; and it does happen sometimes that there is some one they would rather have had speak; and of course there is an occasional backward glance, even after marriage. In Yolande's case I don't think there is. One cannot be certain; but I don't think there is. And why should you be disappointed because she does not too openly show her preference? Of course she can't—in this sort of life. But you will have the whole field to yourself. You have no rival; and she has a quickly grateful nature. You will have her all to yourself in the Highlands. Here she is waiting on her father half the time and the other half Jim is making fun with her. At Investroy it will be quite different."

"Well, perhaps, I hope so." said he.

"Of course it will! You will have her all to yourself. Jim will be away at his fences and his pheasant coops, and I shall have plenty to do in the house. And if you want her to quarrel with you, I daresay she will oblige you. Most girls can manage that. But the first thing to be done, Archie—in sober seriousness—is to buy a very nice engagement ring for her at Cairo; and that will be always reminding her. And I do hope it will be a nice one, a very handsome one indeed. You ought not to consider expense on such an occasion. If you haven't quite enough money with you, Jim will lend you some. It is certainly odd that she should have no family jewelry; but it is all the greater opportunity for you to give her something very pretty; and you ought to show the Winterbournes, for your own sake, and for the sake of our family, that you can do the thing handsomely."

He laughed.

"To hear you, Polly, one would think you were an old woman—a thorough schemer. And yet how long is it since

your chief delight in life used to be to go taboggining down the face Bendyerg?"

"I have learned a little common-sense since then," said pretty Mrs. Graham, with a demure smile.

Well, he did buy a very handsome ring for her when they got to Cairo; and Yolande was greatly pleased with it, and said something very kind and pretty to him. Moreover, there was a good deal of buying going on. The gentlemen at the Consulate had expressed the belief that they were in no immediate danger of having their throats cut; and they set to work to ransack the bazars with a right good will. Nor was there any concealment of the intent of most of those purchases. Of course they bought trinkets and bric-a-brac, mostly for presentation to their friends; and Mr. Winterbourne insisted on Mrs. Graham accepting from him a costly piece of Syrian embroidery on which she had set longing eyes during their previous visit. But the great mass of their purchases—at least of Mr. Winterbourne's purchases—was clearly and obviously meant for the decoration of Yolande's future home. Under Mrs. Graham's guidance he bought all sorts of silk stuffs, embroideries, and draperies. He had a huge case packed with hand-graven brasswork—squat, quaint candlesticks, large shields, cups, trays, and what not; and once, when in an old curiosity shop, and Yolande happening to be standing outside, Mrs. Graham ventured to remonstrate with him about the cost of some Rhodion dishes he had just said he would take, he answered her thus:—

"My dear Mrs. Graham, when in Egypt we must do as the Egyptians do. Don't you remember the bride who came down to the river bringing with her her bales of carpets and her drove of donkeys? Yolande must have her plenishing—that is a good Scotch word is it not?"

"But I should think she must have about a dozen of those shieks' headdresses already," said pretty Mrs. Graham. "And we don't really have so many fancy-dress balls in Inverness. Besides, she could not go as a sheik."

"Fancy-dress balls? Oh no; nothing of the kind. They will do for a dozen things in a room—to be pitched on to sofas or on the backs of chair—merely patches of fine color."

"And that," said she, with a smile, looking at an antique Persian dagger with an exquisitely carved handle and

elaborately inlaid sheath—"of what use will that be in the Highlands?"

"My dear madam," said he, with a perfectly grave face, "I have not listened to your husband and your brother for nothing. Is it not necessary to have something with which to gralloch a wounded stag?"

"To gralloch a stag with a beautiful thing like that!" she exclaimed in horror.

"And if it is too good for that, can not Yolande use it as a paper-knife? You don't mean to say that when you and your husband came home from India you brought back no curiosities with you?"

"Of course we did, and long before that Jim had a whole lot of things from the Summer Palace at Pekin; but then we are old people. These things are too expensive for young people just beginning."

"The bride must have her plenishing," said he, briefly; and then he began to bargain for a number of exceedingly beautiful Damascus tiles, which he thought would just about be sufficient for the construction of a fireplace.

Nor were these people the least bit ashamed when, some days after this, they managed to smuggle their valuable cases on board the homeward-bound steamer without paying the customs dues. Mr. Winterbourne declared that a nation which was so financially mad as to levy an eight per cent *ad valorem* duty on exports—or rather that a nation which was so mad as to tax exports at all—ought not to be there encouraged in its lunacy; and he further consoled his conscience by reflecting that so far from his party having spoiled the Egyptians, it was doubtless all the other way; and that probably some £60 or £70 of English money had been left in the Cairene bazars which had no right to be there. However, he was content. The things were such things as he had wanted; he had got them as cheaply as seemed possible; he would have paid more for them had it been necessary. For, he said to himself, even the rooms of a Highland shooting-box might be made more picturesque and interesting by these art relics of other and former civilizations. He did not know what kind of home the Master of Lynn was likely to provide for his bride; but good colors and good materials were appropriate anywhere; and even if Yolande and her husband were to succeed to the possession of Lynn Towers, and even if the rooms there (as he had heard was the case at Balmoral) were decorated

exclusively in Highland fashion, surely they could set aside some chamber for the reception of those draperies, and potteries, and tiles, and what not, that would remind Yolande of her visit to the East. The bride must have her plenishing, he said to himself again and again. But they bought no jewelry of a good kind in Cairo; Mr. Winterbourne said he would rather trust Bond Street wares.

And at last the big steamer slowly sailed away from the land, and they had begun their homeward voyage. Mrs. Graham and her husband were on the hurricane-deck; she was leaning with both arms on the rail.

"Good-by, Egypt," said she, as she regarded the pale yellow country under the pale turquoise sky. "You have been very kind to me. You have made me a most charming present to take back with me to the Highlands."

"What, then?" said her husband.

"A sister."

"She isn't your sister yet," he said, gruffly.

"She is; and she will be," she answered, confidently.

"Do you know, Jim, I had my hopes and wishes all the way out, but I could never be sure, for Archie is not easily caught. And I don't think she distinguished him much from the others on the voyage here, except in so far as he was one of our party. Sometimes I gave it up, to tell you the truth. And then again it seemed so desirable in every way, for I had got to like the girl myself, and I could see that Archie would be safe with her; and I could see very well, too, that Mr. Winterbourne had his eyes open, and that he seemed very well disposed toward it."

"You must have been watching everybody like a cat," her husband said, in not too complimentary fashion.

"Can you wonder that I was interested?" she said, in protest. "Just fancy what it would be for us if he had brought some horrid insufferable creature to Lynn! I wouldn't have gone near the place; and we have little enough society as it is. But that life on the Nile did it; and I knew it would the moment the dahabeeyah had started away from Asyout—being all by ourselves like that, and he paying her little attentions all day long. He couldn't help doing that, could he?—it wouldn't have been civil. And I foresaw what the end would be; and I am very glad of it, and quite grateful to Egypt and the Nile, despite all the flies and the mosquitoes."

"I dare say it will turn out all right," her husband said, indifferently.

"Well, you don't seem very delighted," she exclaimed. "Is that all you have to say? Don't you think it is a very good thing?"

"Well, yes, I do think it is a good thing. I have no doubt they will get on very well together. And in other respects the match will be an advantageous one."

"That is rather cold approval," said she, somewhat disappointed.

"Oh no, it isn't," said he, and he turned from looking at the retreating land, and regarded her. "I say I don't think he could have chosen better, and I believe they will be happy enough; and they ought to be comfortable and well off. Isn't that sufficient? He seems fond of her; I think they will lead a very comfortable life. What more?"

"But there is something behind what you say, Jim; I know there is," she said.

"And if there is, it is nothing very serious," said he; and then he added, with a curious sort of smile: "I tell you I think it will come out all right; I am sure it will. But you can't deny this, Polly—well, I don't know how to put it. I may be mistaken. I haven't as sharp eyes as yours. But I have a fancy that this marriage, though I have no doubt it will be a happy enough one, will be, on her side at least—"

"What, then?" said his wife, peremptorily.

"I don't quite know whether the French have a phrase for it," said he, evasively, but still with the same odd smile on his face. "Probably they have; they ought to have, at least. At any rate, I have a kind of fancy—now it's nothing very terrible—I say I have a dim kind of fancy that, on her side, the marriage will be something that might be called a *mariage de complaisance*. Oh, you needn't go away in a temper! There have been worse marriages than a *mariage de complaisance*."

CHAPTER XIX.

AMONG THE CLOUDS.

FAR up in the wild and lonely hills that form the backbone as it were, of eastern Inverness-shire, in the desert solitudes where the Findhorn and the Foyers first begin to draw their waters from a thousand mystic named or nameless rills, stands the lodge of Allt-nam-Ba. The plain little double-gabled building, with its dependence of kennels, stables, coachhouse, and keeper's bothy, occupies a promontory formed by the confluence of two brawling streams, and faces a long, wide, beautiful valley, which terminates in the winding waters of a loch. It is the only sign of habitation in the strangely silent district, and it is the last. The rough hill-road leading to it terminates there. From that small plateau divergent corries—softly wooded most of them are, with waterfalls half hidden by birch and rowan trees—stretch up still further into a sterile wilderness of moor and lochan and bare mountain-top, the haunt of the ptarmigan, the red deer, and the eagle; and the only sound to be heard in these voiceless altitudes is the monotonous murmur of the various burns—the White Winding Water, the Dun Water, the Stream of the Red Lochan, the Stream of the Fairies, the Stream of the Corrie of the Horses, as they are called in the Gaelic.

At the door of this solitary little lodge, on a morning toward the end of July, Yolande Winterbourne was standing, engaged in buttoning on her driving gloves, but occasionally glancing out at the bewildering, changeful, flashing, and gleaming day around her. For, indeed, since she had come to live at Allt-nam-Ba she had acquired the conviction that the place seemed very close up to the sky, and that this broad valley, walled in by those great and silent hills, formed a sort of cauldron, in which the elements were in the habit of mixing up weather for transference, to the wide world beyond. At this very moment, for example, a continual phantasmagoria of cloud effects was passing before her eyes. Far mountain-tops grew blacker and blacker in shadow; then the gray mist of the rain stole slowly

across and hid them from view; then they re-appeared again, and a sudden shaft of sunlight would strike on the yellow-green slopes and on the boulders of wet and glittering granite. But she had this one consolation—that the prospect in front of the lodge was much more re-assuring than that behind. Behind—over the mountainous ranges of the moor—the clouds were banking up in a heavy and thunderous purple; and in the ominous silence the streams coming down from the corries sounded loud; whereas, away before her, the valley that led down to the haunts of men was for the most part flooded with brilliant sunlight, and the wide-swept loch was of the darkest and Keenest blue. Altogether there was more life and motion here—more color and brilliancy and change—than in the pale and placid Egyptian landscape she had grown accustomed to; but there was also—she might have been pardoned for thinking—for one who was about to drive fourteen miles in a dog-cart, a little more anxiety, and she had already resolved to take her waterproof with her.

However, she was not much dismayed. She had lived in this weather-brewing cauldron of a place for some little time, and had grown familiar with its threatening glooms, which generally came to nothing, and with its sudden and dazzling glories, which laughed out a welcome to the lonely traveller in the most surprising fashion. When the dog-cart—a four-wheeled vehicle—was brought round, she stepped into it lightly, and took the reins as if to the manner born, though she had never handled a whip until Mrs. Graham had put her in training at Inverstroy. Then there was a strict charge to Jane to see that brisk fires were kept burning in all the rooms; for although it was still July the air of these alpine solitudes was sometimes somewhat keen. And then—the youthful and fair-haired Sandy having got up behind—she released the brake; and presently they were making their way, slowly and cautiously at first, down the stony path, and over the loud sounding wooden bridge that here spans the roaring red-brown waters of the Allt-cam-Ban.

But when once they were over the bridge and into the road leading down the wide strath, they quickly mended their pace. There was an unusual eagerness and brightness in her look. Sandy the groom knew that the stout and serviceable cob in the shafts was a sure-footed beast; but the road was of the roughest; and he could not under-

stand why the young English lady, who was generally very cautious, should drive so fast. Was it to get away from the black thunder masses of cloud that lay over the mountain behind them? Here, at least, there seemed no danger of any storm. The sunlight was brilliant on the wide green pastures and on the flashing waters of the stream; and the steep and sterile hillsides were shining now; and the loch far ahead of them had its wind-rippled surface of a blue like the heart of a sapphire. Yolande's face soon showed the influence of the warm sunlight and of the fresh keen air; and her eyes were glad, though they seemed busy with other things. Indeed, there was scarcely any sign of life around to attract her attention. The sheep on the vast slopes, where there was but a scanty pasturage among the blocks of granite, were as small gray specks; an eagle slowly circling on motionless wing over the furthest mountain range, looked no bigger than a hawk; some young falcons, whose cry sounded just overhead among the crags, were invisible. But perhaps she did not heed these things much. She seemed preoccupied, and yet happy and light-hearted.

When, in due course of time, they reached the end of the valley, and got on to the road that wound along the wooded shores of the loch, there was much easier going, and Sandy dismissed his fears. It was a pretty loch, this stretch of wind-stirred blue water, for the hills surrounding it were somewhat less sterile than those at Allt-nam-Ba; here and there the banks were fringed with hazel; and at the lower end of it, where the river flowing from it wound through a picturesque ravine, were the dark green plantations surrounding Lynn Towers. They had driven for about a mile and a half or so by the shores of the lake, when Yolande fancied she heard some clanking noise proceeding from the other side; and thereupon she instantly asked Sandy what that could be, for any sound save the bleating of sheep or the croak of a raven was an unusual thing here. The young Highland lad strained his eyes in the direction of the distant hillside, and at last he said,—

“Oh yes, I see them now. They will be the men taking up more fencing to the forest. Duncan was speaking about that, madam.”

(For he was a polite youth, as far as his English went.)

“I can't see anything, Sandy,” said the young lady.

“If Miss Winterbourne would be looking about half-

way up the hill—they are by the side of the gray corrie now.”

Then he added, after a second,—

“ I am thinking that will be the Master at the top.”

“ Do you mean the Master of Lynn ? ” she said quickly.

“ Yes, madam.”

“ Well, your eyes are sharper than mine, Sandy. I can see that black speck on the sky-line, but that is all.”

“ He is waving a handkerchief now,” said Sandy with much coolness.

“ Oh, that is impossible. How could he make us out at this distance ? ”

“ The Master will know there is no other carriage than this one coming from Allt-nam-Ba.”

“ Very well, then,” said she taking out her handkerchief and giving it a little shake or two in the sunlight. “ I will take the chance ; but you know, Sandy, it is more likely to be one of the keepers waving his hand to you.”

“ Oh no, madam ; it is the Master himself ; I am sure of it. He was up at the bothy yesterday evening to see Duncan about the gillies, and he was saying something about the new fence above the loch.”

“ Was Mr. Leslie at Allt-nam-Ba last night ? ” said she in surprise.

“ Oh yes, madam.”

“ And he left no message for me ? ”

“ I think there was not any message. But he was asking when Miss Winterbourne’s father was coming and I told him that I was to drive Miss Winterbourne into Foyers this morning.”

“ Oh, that’s all right,” she said, with much content.

By this time they had reached the lower end of the lake ; and when they had crossed the wooden bridge over the river and ascended a bit of a hill, they found themselves opposite Lynn Towers—a large, modern building, which, with its numerous conservatories, stood on a level piece of ground on the other side of the ravine. Then on again ; and in time they beheld stretching out before them a wide and variegated plain, looking rich and fertile and cultivated after the mountainous solitudes they had left behind, while all around them were hanging woods, with open slopes of pasture, and rills running down to the river in the valley beneath. As they drove on and down into that smiling and shining country, the day grew more and more brilliant.

The breaks of blue in the sky grew broader, the silver-gleaming clouds went slowly by to the east, and the air, which was much warmer down here, was perfumed with the delicate resinous odor of the sweet-gale. Wild flowers grew more luxuriantly. Here and there a farmhouse appeared, with fields of grain encroaching on the moorland. And at last, after some miles of this gradual descent, Yolande arrived at a little sprinkling of houses sufficient in number—though much scattered among the fields—to be called a village, and drew up at the small wooden gate of a modest little mansion, very prettily situated in the midst of a garden of roses, columbine, nasturtiums, and other cottage favorites.

No sooner had the carriage stopped than instantly the door was opened by a smiling and comely dame, with silver-gray hair, and pleasant, shrewd gray eyes, who came down the garden path. She was neatly and plainly dressed in a housekeeper-looking kind of costume, but her face was refined and intelligent, and there was a sort of motherliness, in the look with which she regarded the young English lady.

“Do you know that I meant to scold you, Mrs Bell, for robbing your garden again?” said Yolande. “But this time—no—I am not going to scold you; I can only thank you; for my papa is coming to-day; and oh, you should see how pretty the rooms are with the flowers you sent me! But not again now—not any more destroying the garden.”

“Dear me, and is your papa coming the day?” said the elderly woman in a slow, persuasive, gentle, south-country sort of fashion.

“I am going now to meet him at the steamer,” said Yolande quickly. “That is why—”

“Well, now,” said Mrs. Bell, “that is just a most extraordinary piece of good luck; for I happen to have a pair of the finest and plumpest young ducklings that ever I set eyes on.”

“No, no; no, no, no,” Yolande cried, laughing; “I cannot have any more excuses for these kindnesses and kindnesses. Every day since I came here—every day a fresh excuse—and always the boy coming with Mrs. Bell’s compliments—”

“Dinna ye think I know perfectly well,” said the other, in a tone of half-indignant reproof “what it is for a young leddy to be trying housekeeping in a place like yon?”

So there's not to be another word about it. Ye'll jist stop for a minute as ye're going back, and take the ducklings wi' ye; ay, and I've got a nice bunch or two o' fresh-cut lettuce for ye, and a few carrots and turnips—I declare it's a shame to see the things wasting in the gairden, for we canna use the half of them."

"Wouldn't it be simpler for you to give me the garden and the house and everything all at once?" said Yolande. "Well, now, I wish to see Mr. Melville."

"Ye canna do that," was the prompt reply.

"Why?" said the girl, with something of a stare, for she had not been in the habit of having her requests refused up in this part of the world.

"He is at his work," said the elderly dame, glancing at a small building that stood at right angles with the house. "Do ye think I would disturb him when he is at his work? Do ye think I want him to send me about my business?"

"There is a tyrant!" exclaimed Yolande. "Never mind, then; I wanted to thank him for sending me the trout. Now I will not. Well, good-by, Mrs. Bell. I will take the vegetables, and be very grateful to you, but not the ducklings."

"Ye'll jist take the ducklings, as I say, like a sensible young leddy," said Mrs. Bell, with emphasis; "and there is not to be another word about it,"

So on she drove again, on this bright and beautiful July day, through a picturesque and rocky and rugged country, until in time she reached the end of her journey—the charming little hotel that is perched high amid the woods overlooking Loch Ness, within sound of the thundering Foyers Water. And as she had hurried mainly to give the cob a long mid-day rest—the steamer not being due till the afternoon—she now found herself with some hours' leisure at her disposal, which she spent in idly wandering through the umbrageous woods, startling many a half-tame pheasant, but never coming on the real object of her quest, a roe-deer. And then, at last, she heard the throbbing of paddle-wheels in the intense silence, and just about as quick as any roe-deer she made her way down through the bracken and the bushes, and went right out to the end of the little pier.

She made him out at once, even at that distance; for though he was not a tall man, his sharp-featured, sun-reddened face and silver-white hair made him easily recognizable. And of course she was greatly delighted when

he came ashore, and excited too; and she herself would have carried gun-cases, fishing-baskets, and what not to the dog-cart, had not the boots from the hotel interfered. And she had a hundred eager questions and assurances, but would pay no heed to his remonstrance about the risk of her driving.

"Why, papa, I drove every day at Inverstroy!" she exclaimed, as they briskly set out for Allt-nam-Ba.

"I suppose the Grahams were very kind to you?" he said.

"Oh, yes, yes, yes."

"And the Master, how is he?"

"Oh, very well, I believe. Of course I have not seen him since Mrs. Graham left. But he has made all the arrangements for you—ponies, papiers, everything quite arranged. And he left the rifle at the bothy; and I have the cartridges all right from Inverness—oh yes, you will find everything prepared; and there is no want of provision, for Mr. Melville sends me plenty of trout, and Duncan goes up the hill now and again for a hare, and they are sending me a sheep from the farm—"

"A sheep!"

"Duncan said it was the best way, to have a sheep killed. And we have new-laid eggs and fresh milk every day. And every one is so kind and attentive, papa, that whatever turns out wrong, that will be my fault in not arranging properly—"

"Oh, that will be all right," said he, good-humoredly. "I want to hear about yourself, Yolande. What do you think of Lord Lynn and his sister, now that you have seen something more of them?"

This question checked her volubility, and for a second a very odd expression came over her face.

"They are very serious people, papa," said she with some caution. "And—and very pious, I think."

"But I suppose you are as pious as they can be?" her father said. "That is no objection."

She was silent.

"And those other people—the old woman who pretends to be a housekeeper, and is a sort of Good Fairy in disguise and the penniless young laird who has no land—"

Instantly her face brightened up.

"Oh, he is the most extraordinary person, papa—a magician! I can not describe it; you must see for your-

self; but really it is wonderful. He has a stream to work for him—yes, for Mrs. Graham and I went and visited it—climbing away up the hill—and there was the water-wheel at work in the water, and a hut close by, and there were copper wires to take the electricity away down to the house, where he has a store of it. It is a genie for him; he makes it light the lamps in the house, in the schoolroom, and it makes electrotype copies for him; it works a lathe for turning wood—oh, I can't tell you all about it. And he has been so kind to me! but mostly in secret, so that I could not catch him to thank him. How could I know? I complain to Mrs. Bell that it is a trouble to send to Inverness for some one to set the clock going: the next morning—it is all right! It goes; nothing wrong at all! Then the broken window in the drawing-room: Mrs. Graham and I drive away to Fort Augustus; when I come back in the evening there is a new pane put in. Then the filter in the water-tank up the hill—”

“But what on earth is this wonderful Jack-of all trades doing here? Why, you yourself wrote to me, Yolande, that he had taken the Snell Exhibition and the Ferguson Scholarship, and blazed like a comet through Balliol; and now I find him tinkering at window-panes.”

She laughed.

“I think he works very hard: he says he is very lazy. He is very fond of fishing, he is not well off, and here he is permitted to fish in the lakes far away among the hills that few people will take the trouble to go to. Then naturally he has much interest in this neighborhood, where once his people were the great family; and those living here have a great respect for him; and he has built a school, and teaches in it—it is a free school, no charge at all,” Yolande, added, hastily. “That is Mrs. Bell's kindness, the building of the school. Then he makes experiments and discoveries: is it not enough of an occupation when every one is talking about the electric light? Also he is a great botanist; and when it is not schooltime he is away up in the hills after rare plants, or to fish. Oh, it is terrible the loneliness of the small lakes up in the hills, Mr. Leslie has told me; no road, no track, no life anywhere. And the long hours of climbing: oh, I am sure I have been sorry sometimes—many times—when day after day I receive a present of trout and a message, to think of the long climbing and the labor—”

"But why doesn't he fish in the loch at All-nam-Ba?" her father exclaimed. "That can't be so difficult to get at."

"He had permission last year," said she.

"Why not this?"

"He thought it would be more correct to wait for you to give permission."

"Well, now, Yolande," said he, peevishly, "how could you be so stupid? Here is a fellow who shows you all sorts of kindnesses, and you haven't enough common-sense to offer him a day's fishing in the loch!"

"It was not my affair," she said, cheerfully. "That was for you to arrange."

"Waiting for permission to fish in a loch like that!" her father said, more good-naturedly, for indeed his discontent with Yolande rarely lasted for more than about the fifteenth part of a second. "Leslie told me the loch would be infinitely improved if five-sixths of the fish were netted out of it; the trout would run to a better size. However, Miss Yolande, since you've treated him badly, you must make amends. You must ask him to dinner."

"Oh yes, papa, I shall be glad to do that," she said, blithely.

"If the house is anywhere near the road, we can pick him up as we go along. Then I suppose you could send a message to the Master; he is not likely to have an engagement."

"But you don't mean for to-night," she said, in amazement.

"I do, indeed. Why not?"

"What! the first night that we have to ourselves together, to think of inviting strangers?"

"Strangers?" he repeated. "That is an odd phrase to be used by a young lady who wears an engaged ring."

"But I am not married, yet, papa," said she, flushing slightly. "I am only engaged. When I am a wife, it may be different; but at present I am your daughter."

"And you would rather that we had this first evening all by ourselves?"

"It is not a wish papa," said she, coolly; "it is a downright certainty. There is only dinner for two, and there will be only dinner for two, and these two are you and I. Do you forget that I am mistress of the house?"

Well, he seemed nothing loath; the prospect did not at

all overcloud his face, as they drove away through this smiling and cheerful and picturesque country, with the severer altitude beyond gradually coming into view.

The same night Yolande and her father set out for an arm-in-arm stroll away down the broad silent valley. It was late; but still there was a bewilderment of light all around them, for in the northwestern heavens the wan twilight still lingered, while behind them, in the southeast, the moon had risen, and now projected their shadows before them as they walked. Yolande was talkative and joyous—the silence and the loneliness of the place did not seem to oppress her; and he was always a contented listener. They walked away along the strath, under the vast solitude of the hills, and by the side of this winding and murmuring stream, and in time they reached the loch. For a wonder it was perfectly still. The surface was like glass, and those portions that were in shadow were black as jet. But these were not many, for the moonlight was shining adown this wide space, touching softly the overhanging crags and the woods, and showing them, as they got on still further, above the loch and the bridge and the river, and standing silent amid the silent plantations, the pale white walls of Lynn.

“And so you think, Yolande,” said he, “that you will be quite happy in living in this solitary place?”

“If you were always to be away—oh no; but with you coming to see me sometimes, as now—oh, yes yes: why not?” said she, cheerfully.

“You wouldn’t mind being cut off from the rest of the world?” he said.

“I?” she said. “What is it to me? I know so few people elsewhere.”

“It would be a peaceful life, Yolande,” said he, thoughtfully. “Would it not?”

“Oh yes,” she answered, brightly. “And then, papa, you would take Allt-nam-Ba for the whole year, every year, and not merely have a few weeks’ shooting the autumn. Why should it not be a pleasant place to live in? Could anything be more beautiful than to-night—and the solitude? And one or two of the people are so kind. But this I must tell you, papa, that the one who has been kindest to me here is not Lord Lynn, nor his sister, Mrs. Colquhoun, nor any one of them, but Mrs. Bell; and the first chance, when she is sure not to meet Mr. Melville, or Mr. Leslie—for she is very particular about that, and pretends only to

be a housekeeper—I am going to bring her up to Allt-namba; and you will see how charming she is, and how good and wise and gentle, and how proud she is of Mr. Melville. As for him, he laughs at her. He laughs at every one. He has no respect for any one more than another; he talks to Lord Lynn as he talks to Duncan—perhaps with more kindness to Duncan. Rich or poor, it is no difference—no, he does not seem to understand that there is a difference; And all the people, the shepherds, the gillies, and Mrs. Macdougall at the farm—every one thinks there is no one like him. Perhaps I have learned a little from him, even in so short a time; it may be. I do not care that Mrs. Bell has been a cook; that is nothing to me; I see that she is a good woman, and clever, and kind; and I will be her friend if she pleases; and I know that he gives her more honor than to any one else, though he does not say much. No, he is too sarcastic; and not very courteous. Sometimes he is almost rude; but he is a little more considerate with old people—”

“Look here, Yolande,” her father said, with a laugh. “All this afternoon, and all this evening, and all down this valley, you have done nothing but talk about this wonderful Mr. Melville, although you say you have scarcely ever seen him.”

“No, no, no, papa. I said, when he had done any kindness to me, he had kept out of the way, and I had no chance to thank him.”

“Very well: all your talking has produced nothing but a jumble. I want to see this laird without land, this Balliol clockmaker, this fisherman schoolmaster, this idol who is worshipped by the natives. Let me see what he is like, first of all. Ask him to dinner, and the Master too. We have few neighbors, and we must make the most of them. So now let us get back home again, child; though it is almost a shame to go indoors on such a night. And you don't really think you would regret being shut off from the world, Yolande, in this solitude?”

She was looking along the still loch, and the wooded shores, and the moonlit crags that were mirrored in the glassy water; and her eyes were happy enough.

“Is it not like fairyland, papa? How could one regret living in such a beautiful place? Besides,” she added, cheerfully, “have I not promised?” And therewith she

hold out her ungloved hand for a second; and he understood what she meant; for he saw the three diamonds on her engagement ring clear in the moonlight.

CHAPTER XX.

“MELVILLE’S WELCOME HOME.”

AMID all the hurry and bustle of preparing for the Twelfth, Yolande and her affairs seemed half forgotten; and she, for one, was glad to forget them; for she rejoiced in the activity of the moment, and was proud to see that the wheels of the little household worked very smoothly. And long ago she had mastered all the details about the luncheon to be sent up the hill, and the dinner for the gillies, and what not; she had got her instructions from Mrs. Graham at Inverstry.

In the midst of all this, however, the Master of Lynn wrote the following note to his sister:

“LYNN TOWERS, *August, 8.*

“DEAR POLLY,—I wish to goodness you would come over here for a couple of days and put matters straight. I am helpless. I go for a little quiet to Allt-nam-Ba. I would ask Jack Melville to interfere, but he is so blunt-tongued he would most likely make the row worse. Of course it’s all Tabby: if ever I succeed to Lynn, won’t I make the old cat skip out of that! I expected my father to be cross when I suggested something about Yolande, but I thought he would see the reasonableness, etc. But Tabby heard of it, and then it was all ‘alliance with demagogues,’ ‘disgrace of an ancient family,’ ‘the Leslies selling their honor for money, and other rubbish. I don’t mind. It doesn’t hurt me. I have not knocked about with Jack Melville for nothing; I can distinguish between missiles that are made of air, and pass by you, and missiles that are made of wood, and can cut your head open. But the immediate thing is this: they won’t call on the Winterbournes, and this is not only a gross discourtesy, but very impolitic. I should not at all wonder, if Mr. Winterbourne has a good season this

year, if he were to take a lease of Allt-nam-Ba; and Duncan is reckoning on 1200 brace. As a good tenant my father ought to call on Mr. Winterbourne, if for nothing else. And of course matters can not remain as they are. There must be an explanation. What I am dreadfully afraid of is that Yolande may meet Tabby some day, and that Tabby may say something. At present they have only met driving—I mean since you left—so that was only a case of bowing. To hear Tabby talk would make you laugh; but it makes me rather wild, I confess; and though my father says less, or nothing at all, I can see that what she says is making him more and more determined. So do come along, and bring some common-sense into the atmosphere of the house. What on earth has politics got to do with Yolande? Come and fight it out with Tabby.

“Your affectionate brother,

“A LESLIE.”

This was the answer that arrived on the evening of the next day:

“INVERSTROY, August 9. ❧

“DEAR ARCHIE,—You must have gone mad. We have visitors in the house already, and by the day after to-morrow we shall be full to the hall door. It is quite absurd; Jim has not asked a single bachelor this year, and every man who is coming is bringing his wife. Did you ever hear of such a thing?—really I can’t understand why women should be such fools: not a single invitation refused! But there is one thing—*they will get a good dose of grouse talk before they go south*, and if they are not heartily sick of hearing about stags it will be a wonder. So you see, my dear Master, you must worry out of that muddle in your own way; and I have no doubt you got into it through temper, and being uncivil to Aunt Colquhoun. It is impossible for me to leave Inverstroy at present. But whatever you do don’t get spiteful, and go and run away with *Shena Van*.

“Your affectionate sister,

“POLLY.”

Well, it was not until the eve of the Twelfth that Yolande gave her first dinner-party, the delay having chiefly been occasioned by their having to wait for some wine from Inverness. This was a great concession on the part of her father; but when he discovered that she was desperately

afraid that her two guests, the Master of Lynn and Mr. Melville, would imagine that the absence of wine from the table was due to her negligence and stupidity as a house-keeper, he yielded at once. Nay, in case they might throw any blame on her of any kind, her father himself wrote to a firm in Inverness, laying strict injunctions on them as to brands and so forth. All of which trouble was quite thrown away, as it turned out, for both the young men seemed quite indifferent about drinking anything; but the wine was there and Yolande could not be blamed: that was his chief and only consideration.

Just before dinner Mr. Winterbourne, Yolande, and the Master were standing outside the lodge, looking down the wide glen, which was now flooded with sunset light. Young Leslie's eyes were the eyes of a deer-stalker; the slightest movement anywhere instantly attracted them; and when two sheep—little dots they were, at the far edge of the hill just above the lodge—suddenly ceased grazing and lifted their heads, he knew there must be some one there. The next moment a figure appeared on the sky-line.

"I suppose that is Jack Melville," he said, peevishly. "I wish he wouldn't come across the forest when he is up at his electric boxes."

"But does he do harm?" said Yolande. "He cannot shoot deer with copper wire."

"Oh, he's all over the place," said the Master of Lynn. "And there isn't a keeper or a watcher who will remonstrate with him, and of course I can't. He's always after his botany, or his fishing, or something. The best thing about it is that he is a capital hand to have with you if there are any stray deer about, and you want to have a shot without disturbing the herd. He knows their ways most wonderfully, and can tell you the track they are certain to take."

Meanwhile the object of these remarks was coming down the hillside at a swinging pace, and very soon he had crossed the little bridge, and was coming up the path, heralding his arrival with a frank and careless greeting to his friends. He was a rather tall, lean, large-boned, and powerful-looking man of about eight and twenty; somewhat pale in face, seeing that he lived so much out of doors; his hair a raven black: his eyes gray, penetrating, and steadfast; his mouth firm and yet mobile and expressive at times; his forehead square rather than lofty; his voice, a

chest voice, was heard in pleasant and well-modulated English: he had not acquired any trace of the high falsetto that prevails (or prevailed a few years ago) among the young men at Oxford. As for his manner, that was characterized chiefly by a curious simplicity and straightforwardness. He seemed to have no time to be self-conscious. When he spoke to any one, it was without thought or heed of any bystander. With that one person he had to do. Him or her he seized, with look and voice; and even after the most formal introduction he would speak to you in the most simple and direct way, as if life were not long enough to be wasted in conventionalities, as if truth were the main thing, as if all human beings were perfectly alike, and as if there was no reason in the world why this new stranger should not be put on the footing of a friend. If he had an affectation, it was to represent himself as a lazy and indolent person, who believed in nothing, and laughed at everything, whereas he was extremely industrious and undefatigable, while there were certainly two or three things that he believed in—more, perhaps, than he would confess.

“Here, Miss Winterbourne,” said he, “is the little vasculum I spoke to you about; it has seen some service, but it may do well enough. And here is Bentley’s *Manual*, and a *Flora*. The *Flora* is an old one; I brought an old one purposely, for at the beginning there is a synopsis of the Linnæan system of classification, and you will find that the easiest way of making out the name of a new plant. Of course,” he added, when he had put the vasculum and the books on the window-sill and come back, “when you get further on, when you begin to see how all these plants have grown to be what they are, when you come to study the likenesses and relationships—and unless you mean to go so far you are only wasting time to begin—you will follow Jussieu and De Candolle; but in the meantime you will find the Linnæan system a very dodgy instrument when you are in a difficulty. Then, another thing—mind, I am assuming that you mean business; if you want to frivvle, and pick pretty posies, I shut my door on you, but, I say, if you mean business, I have told Mrs. Bell you are to have access to my herbarium, whether I’m there or not.”

But here Yolande began to laugh.

“Oh yes, that is so probable!” said she. “Mrs. Bell allowing me to go into your study!”

"Mrs. Bell and I understand each other very well, I assure you," he said, gravely. "We are only two augurs, who wink at each other; or rather we shut our eyes to each other's humbug."

"Why, Jack, she means to buy back Monaglen for you!" the Master of Lynn exclaimed.

"I know she has some romantic scheme of that sort in her head," he said, frankly. "It is quite absurd. What should I do with Monaglen? However, in the meantime I have made pretty free use of the old lady's money at Gress; and she is highly pleased, for she was fond of my father's family, and she likes to hear me spoken well of, and you can so easily purchase gratitude—especially with somebody else's money. You see, it works well all round. Mrs. Bell, who is an honest, shrewd, good, kindly woman, sees that her charity is administrated with some care; the people around—but especially the children—are benefited; I have leisure for any little experiments and my idle rambles; and if Mrs. Bell and I hoodwink each other, it is done very openly, and there is no great harm."

"She was very indignant," said young Leslie, laughing, "when you wouldn't have your name put on the tablet in the schoolhouse."

"What tablet?" said Yolande.

"Oh a tablet saying that Mr. Melville had built the school and presented it to the people of Gress."

"And I never contributed a farthing!" he said. "She did the whole thing. Well, now, that shows how artificial the position is; and, necessarily, it won't last. We have for so long been hypocrites for the public good—let us say it was for the public good; but there must come an end."

"Why, Jack, if you leave Gress you'll fairly break the old dame's heart. And as for the neighborhood—it will be like the going away of Aikendrum."

"Who was that?" said Yolande.

"I am sure I don't know. Mrs. Bell will sing the song for you, if you ask her; she knows all those old things. I don't know who the gentleman was, but they made a rare fuss about his going away.

" 'Bout him the carles were gabbin',
The braw laddies sabbin',
And a' the lassies greetin',
For that Aikendrum's awa'! "

"The dinner is ready, madam," said a soft-voiced and pretty Highland maid-servant, appearing at the door; and Yolande's heart sank within her. She summoned up her courage nevertheless; she walked into the room sedately, and took her place at the head of the table with much graciousness, though she was in reality very nervous and terribly anxious about the result of this wild experiment. Well, she need not have been anxious. The dinner was excellently cooked, and very fairly served. And if those two younger men seemed quite indifferent as to what they ate and drank, and much more interested in a discussion about certain educational matters, at least Mr. Winterbourne noted and approved; and greatly comforted was she from time to time to hear him say: "Yolande, this is capital hare soup; why can't we get hare soup cooked in this way in the south?" Or, "Yolande, these are most delicious trout. Mr. Melville's catching, I suppose? It seems to me you have stumbled on an uncommonly good cook." Or, "What? Another robbery of Mrs. Bell's poultry yard? Well, they're fine birds—noble, noble. We must send her some grouse to-morrow, Yolande."

And then outside there was a sudden and portentous growl of bass drones; and then the breaking away into the shrill clear music of a quickstep; and through the blue window-panes they could see in the dusk the tall, tightly built figure of young Duncan, the pipes over his shoulder, marching erect and proud up and down the gravel-path. That was the proper way to hear the pipes—away up there in the silence of the hills, amid the gathering gloom of the night; and now they would grow louder and shriller as he drew near, and now they would grow fainter and fainter as he passed by, while all around them, whether the music was faint or shrill, was the continuous hushed murmur of the mountain streams.

"I told Duncan," said Yolande to the Master, "that it was a shame he should keep all his playing for the shepherds in the bothy. And he told me that he very well knew the 'Hills of Lynn.'"

Young Leslie regarded her with an odd kind of smile.

"You don't think that is the 'Hills of Lynn,' do you, Yolande?"

"Is it not? I have heard very few."

"No; I am not first favorite to-night. It isn't the 'Hills of Lynn.' That is 'Melville's Welcome Home.'"

Yolande looked surprised, but not in any way guilty.

"I assure you, Miss Winterbourne," said Jack Melville, pleasantly enough, "that I don't feel at all hurt or insulted. I know Duncan means no sarcasm. He is quite well aware that we haven't had a home to welcome us this many a day; but he is not playing the quickstep out of irony. He and I are too old friends for that."

"Oh, I am sure he does not mean anything like that," said Yolande. "It is a great compliment he means, is it not?"

Then coffee came; and cigars and pipes were produced and as Yolande had no dread of tobacco smoke, they all remained together, drawing in their chairs to the brisk fire of wood and peat, and forming a very friendly, snug, and comfortable little circle. Nor was their desultory chatting about educational projects solely; nor, on the other hand, was it confined to grouse and the chances of the weather; it rambled over many and diverse subjects, while always, from time to time, could be heard in the distance (for Duncan had retired to regale his friends in the bothy) the faint echoes of "The Seventy-ninth's Farewell to Gibraltar," or "Mackenzie's Farewell to Sutherland," or "The Barren Rocks of Aden," with occasionally the sad slow wail of a Lament—"Lord Lovat's," or "Mackintosh's," or "Mac Crimmon's." And as Mr. Melville proved to be a very ready talker (as he lay back there in an easy-chair, with the warm rays of the fire lighting up his fine intellectual features and clear and penetrating gray eyes), Mr. Winterbourne had an abundant opportunity of studying this new friend; and so far from observing in him any of the brow-beating and brusqueness he had heard of, on the contrary, he discovered the most ample tolerance, and more than that, a sort of large-hearted humanity a sympathy, a sincerity and directness of speech, that begun to explain to him why Mr. Melville of Gress was such a favorite with those people about there. He seemed to assume that the person he was talking to was his friend; and that it was useless to waste time in formalities of conversation. His manner toward Yolande (her father thought) was characterized by just a little too much of indifference: but then he was a schoolmaster, and not in the habit of attaching importance to the opinions of young people.

It was really a most enjoyable, confidential, pleasant evening; but it had to come to an end; and when the two

young men left, both Yolande and her father accompanied them to the door. The moon was risen now, and the long wide glen looked beautiful enough.

"Well, now, Mr. Melville," said Mr. Winterbourne, as they were going away, "whenever you have an idle evening, I hope you will remember us, and take pity on us."

"You may see too much of me."

"That is impossible," said Yolande, quickly; and then she added, very prettily, "You know, Mr. Melville, if you come often enough you will find it quite natural that Duncan should play for you 'Melville's Welcome Home.'"

He stood for a moment uncertain; it was the first sign of embarrassment he had shown that night."

"Well," said he, "that is the most friendly thing that has been said to me for many a day. Who could resist such an invitation? Good-night—good-night."

CHAPTER XXI.

NEIGHBORS.

As it turned out, John Shortlands could not come north till the 20th; so Mr. Winterbourne asked young Leslie to shoot with him for the first week, and the invitation had been gratefully accepted. The obligation, however, was not all on one side. The Master of Lynn was possessed of a long and familiar experience of the best and swiftest methods of getting the birds sent to a good market; and he made his arrangements in this direction with a business-like forethought which amused Mr. Winterbourne, who expressed some whimsical scruples over his being transformed into a game-dealer.

"I don't look at it in that light at all," the Master said, coolly. "Game is the only thing land like that will produce; and I like to know what it is worth. I think I can guarantee that the hire of the gillies and ponies and panniers won't cost you a farthing."

"You should not be so anxious to have your own moor hard shot," said Mr. Winterbourne, with a smile.

"But I am," said this shrewd young man. "There is no

danger, on ground like this, of too small a breeding stock being left. It is all the other way. What I am afraid of is too big a stock, and the disease coming along. That is a terrible business. You are congratulating yourself on the number of birds, and on their fine condition; and some pleasant morning you wake up to find the place swept clean."

"Not in one night?"

"Well, a day or two will do it. This epidemic is quite different from the ordinary mild forms of disease, where you can see the birds pining away to death. Instead of that you find them all about among the heather, dead, but perfectly plump and well-looking, not a sign of disease outside or in. So, if you please, Mr. Winterbourne, don't have any scruples about turning on Duncan if you think we are not doing well enough. The bigger consignment we can send off the better."

Now one consequence of this arrangement was that when Yolande, in the morning, had said "Good-by, papa," and "Good-by, Archie," and given each of them a flower or some such trifle (for in that part of the country the presentation of a small gift, no matter what, to any one going shooting, is supposed to bring good luck), and when she had seen that luncheon was quite prepared to be sent up the hill when the first pony left, she found herself with the whole day before her, with no companion, and with no occupation save that of wandering down the glen or up one of the hillsides in search of new flowers. It is not to be wondered at, then, that she should seek some variety by occasionally driving into Gress, when the dog-cart was taking the game shot the day before to Foyers, and spending a few hours with Mrs. Bell until the trap came back to pick her up again. For one thing, when she discovered some plants unknown to her, she found it was much easier to consult Mr. Melville's herbarium than to puzzle over the descriptions of the various species in the *Flora*; and as he was generally occupied either in the schoolhouse or in his laboratory, she did not interfere with him. But the truth is, she liked this shrewd, kindly, wise old Scotchwoman, who was the only one in the neighborhood who took any notice of her. The people at the Towers had neither called nor made any other overtures. And as Mrs. Bell's thoughtfulness and kindness took the substantial form of sending up to Allt-nam-Ba, pretty nearly every day, some article or articles likely to be of use

to the young housekeeper, of course Yolande had to drive in to thank her.

“Mrs. Bell,” said she, one warm and sunny afternoon, when they were together in the garden (this good woman made awful havoc among her flowers when Yolande came to see her), “who was Aikendrum?”

“A young lad who went away for a sodger—so the song says.”

“And every one was so sorry, is it not so?” said this tall young lady, who already had her hands full of flowers. “The Master was saying that if Mr. Melville leaves here, every one will be quite as sorry—it will be like the going away of Aikendrum.”

“Why should he go?” said Mrs. Bell, sharply. “Why should he not stay among his own people—yes, and on land that may be his own one day?” And then she added, more gently: “It is not a good thing for one to be away among strangers; there’s many a sore heart comes o’ that. It’s not only them that are left behind; sometimes it’s the one that goes away that is sorrowfu’ enough about it. I dare say, now, ye never heard o’ an old Scotch song they call ‘The sun rises bright in France’?”

“Oh, will you sing it for me?” said Yolande, eagerly; for indeed the reputation of this good dame for the singing of those old Scotch songs was wide in that district, though it was not every one whom she would honor. And her singing was strangely effective. She had but little of a voice; she crooned rather than sang; but she could give the words a curiously pathetic quality; and she had the natural gift of knowing what particular airs she could make tell.

She laid her hand on Yolande’s arm, as if to ask for attention:—

“ ‘The sun rises bright in France,
And fair sets he;
But he has tint the blink he had
In my ain countrie.
It’s no my ain ruin
That weets aye my e’e,
But the dear Marie I left behind
Wi’ sweet bairnies three.’ ”

Ye’ve no heard that before?”

“Oh no. It is a very sad air. But why Marie?—that is French.”

“Well ye see, the French and the Scotch were very

thick* in former days, and Marie was a common name in Scotland. I am told they spoke nothing but French at Holyrood; and the young gentlemen they were all for joining the French service—”

“But is there no more of the song, Mrs. Bell?”

“Oh, ay, there are other two verses. But it’s no for an auld wife like me to be singing havers.”

“Please.”

“Very well, then:

“ ‘ The bud comes back to summer,
And the blossom to the tree,
But I win back, oh, never,
To my ain countrie.
Gladness comes to many,
Sorrow comes to me,
As I look o’er the wide ocean
To my ain countrie.

“ ‘ Fu’ bienly low’d my ain hearth,
And smiled my ain Marie :
Oh, I’ve left my heart behind
In my ain countrie !
Oh, I’m leal to high heaven,
Which aye was leal to me,
And it’s there I’ll meet ye a’ soon,
Frae my ain countrie.’ ’ †

“It is a beautiful air—but so sad,” Yolande said. And then she added, slyly, “And now ‘Aikendrum.’”

But Mrs. Bell doggedly refused,

“I tell ye it’s no for an auld wife like me to be fashing with such blethers; it’s for young lassies when they’re out at the herding. And I hope, now, that ye are no likely to put any ‘Aikendrum’ notions into Mr. Melville’s head. Let him stay where he is. Maybe we’ll get him a better stance ‡ in the countryside soon: stranger things have come to pass.”

“I?” said Yolande; “is it likely I should wish him to go away? Perhaps you do not know, then, that I am going to live in this neighborhood—no?”

“Oh, indeed; is that possible, noo?” said Mrs. Bell—and she would say no more. She was herself most kindly and communicable; but always she preserved a certain reserve of manner in a case like this. However, Yolande was quite frank.

* Thick—intimate.

† The words of this song are by Allan Cunningham; the music is an old Celtic air.

‡ Stance—holding or position.

“Oh yes,” said the young lady, cheerfully. “Of course I must live here when I am married; and of course, too, I look forward to seeing Mr. Melville always. He will be our nearest friend—almost the only one. But it is so difficult to catch him. Either he is in the school, or he is up at the water-wheel—why, this moment, now if I could see him, I would ask him to drive out to Allt-nam-Ba, when the carriage comes, and stay to dine with us.”

“I wish ye would—eh, I wish ye would, my dear young leddy!” the old dame exclaimed. “For the way he goes on is just distressing. Not a settled proper meal will he sit down to; nothing but a piece of cold meat aye to be standing by. There it is—in there among they smelling chemical things—day and night there must aye be the same thing on the side table waiting for him—some cold meat, a bit o’ bread, and a wee, scrimpit, half-pint bottle o’ that fushionless claret wine that is not one preen point better than vinegar. And then when he gives the bairns a day’s holiday, and starts away for Loch-na-lairige—a place that no one has ever won to but the shepherd—not a thing in his pocket but a piece o’ bread and cheese. How he keeps up his strength—a big-boned man like that—passes me. If ye want to anger him, that’s the way to do it—compel him to sit doon to a respectable meal, and get the lasses to prepare a few things for him in a clever kind o’ way, as ye would get in any Christian house. Well, many a time I think if that’s the mainer they train young men at Oxford they would be better brought up at another place. And what is the use of it? His means are far beyond his wants—I take care there is no wastefulness in the housekeeping, for one thing; and even if they were not, is there not my money?—and a proud woman I would be that day that he would take a penny of it.”

At this moment the object of these remarks came out of the laboratory—a small building standing at right angles with the house—and he was buttoning his coat as if he had just put it on.

“Good-afternoon, Miss Winterbourne,” said he, and he seemed very pleased to see her as he took her hand for a second. “I thought I heard your voice. And I have got a word of approval for you.”

“Oh, indeed?” said she, smiling; for occasionally his schoolmaster air and his condescending frankness amused her.

"I had a look over my herbarium last night: you have been very careful."

"You thought I should not be?"

"I did not know. But if there had been any confusion or mischief done, I should not have mentioned it—no, probably I should have let you have your will; only I would never have allowed any one else to go near the place; so you see you would have been inflicting injury on an unknown number of persons in the future."

"But how wrong not to tell me?" she exclaimed.

"Oh, you have been careful enough. Indeed, you have taken unnecessary trouble. It is quite enough if the different genera are kept separate; it is not necessary that the species should follow in the same order as they are in the *Flora*. You must not give yourself that trouble again."

"When the dog-cart comes along," said she, "I hope you will drive out with me to Allt-nam-Ba, and spend the evening with us."

"You are very kind."

"No, I am scheming," she said. "The truth is the fishmonger at Inverness has disappointed me—no, no, no, Mrs. Bell, on the whole he has been very good; but this time there is a mistake; and do you think, Mr. Melville, if you are taking your rod you could get me a few trout out of the loch on the way home? Is it too much to ask?"

He glanced at the sky. "I think we might manage it," said he, "though it is rather clear. There may be a breeze on the loch; there generally is up there. But what we ought to do is to set out now and walk it; and let the trap pick us up at the loch. Can you walk so far?"

"I should think so!" said Yolande. "And be delighted to."

"Well, I will go and get my rod and basket. Then as we go along I can tell you the names of any plants you don't know; or answer any questions that may be puzzling you. Don't be afraid to ask. I like it. It helps to keep one's recollections clear. And I never laugh at ignorance; it is the pretense of knowledge that is contemptible."

They did not, however, talk botany exclusively as they walked away from Gress on this beautiful afternoon; for he very speedily discovered that she knew far more about him and his family and his affairs than he could possibly have imagined.

"The days in Egypt were long," she explained, "and

the Master used to tell me all about this neighborhood, until, when I came to it, everything seemed quite familiar."

"You have been a great traveller," he said.

"Yes, we have travelled about a good deal. And you?"

"Not much. I think I am too lazy. The kind of travelling that I enjoy is to sit out in the garden of a summer evening, in an easy-chair, and to watch the sunset, and perhaps the moon slowly rising—"

"But you said travelling," she said.

"Well, you are hurling along at a rate of 68,000 miles an hour; isn't that quick enough for anything?" he said laughing.

"It is a cheap way of travelling," said she, with a smile.

"That is why it suits me."

"But you don't see much."

"No! Not when you can watch the stars appear one by one over the hill-tops? Don't you think they are as interesting as the shops in the Palais Royal? They are more mysterious, at all events. It does seem odd, you know, when you think of the numbers of human beings all over the world—the small, tiny creatures—sticking up their little tin tubes at the midnight sky, and making guesses at what the stars are made of, and how they came to be there. It is a pathetic kind of thing to think about. I fancy I must try a 'Zulu' and a 'March Brown.'"

This startling *non sequitur* was caused by the fact that by this time they had reached the loch, and that he frequently thought aloud in this fashion, heedless of any incongruity and heedless also of his companion. He sat down on a lump of granite, and took out his fly-book.

"Won't you walk on to the lodge, Miss Winterbourne?" said he. "I am going to drift down in the boat, and it will be slow work for you."

"I will wait on the bank," said she, "and watch. Do you not understand that I am seriously interested?"

"Then you will see whether I get any. It is a sport," he added, as he was selecting the flies, "that there is less to be said against than shooting, I imagine. I don't like the idea of shooting birds, especially after I have missed one or two. Birds are such harmless creatures. But the fish is different—the fish is making a murderous snap at an innocent fly, or what he thinks to be a fly, when a little bit of steel catches him in the very act. It serves him right from the moral point of view."

"But surely he is justified in trying to get his dinner," said she. "Just as you are doing now."

"Well, I will put on a jay's wing also," said he, "and if they don't like one or other of those nice wholesome little dishes, we must try them with something else."

As it happened, however, the trout seemed disposed to rise to anything, for it was a good fishing afternoon—warm, with a light wind ruffling the surface of the loch. By the time the dogcart came along he had got close on two dozen in his basket, averaging about three to the pound, so that a selection from them would do very well for dinner; and when he got ashore, and got into the trap, Yolande thanked him for them very prettily, while he, on the other hand, said that the obligation was all on his side.

"Why do you not come oftener, then?" she said as they were driving along up the wide glen.

"I might be depriving some one else of the use of the boat," he answered.

"No, no; how can that be?" she insisted. "They are all day up the hill. Why do you not come to the loch every afternoon, and then come in and spend the evenings with us? Mrs. Bell says you do very wrong about your food, not having proper meals at proper times. Now we are always very punctual; and if you came in and dined with us, it would teach you good habits."

"You are too kind, Miss Winterbourne," said he. "But please don't think that I have forgotten the invitation you gave me the other night. I could not be so ungrateful as that."

"And what is the use of remembering, if you do not act on it?" said she; but she could not lecture the schoolmaster any further just then, for they had arrived at the wooden bridge, and she had to let the cob go very cautiously over that primitive structure.

After dinner that evening Mr. Winterbourne begged to be excused for a short time, as he had a letter to write that he wished posted at Whitebridge the same night. This was the letter:

ALLT-NAM-BA, *August 15.*

"DEAR SHORTLANDS,—I am sending you a couple of brace of birds, and would send you more but that I can see that my future son-in-law regards these bequests with great disfavor; and as it is in my interest that he is trying to

make as much as he can out of the shooting, I don't like to interfere with his economical exertions. Prudence in a young man should be encouraged rather than checked. I hope you will not be later than the 20th. I shall be glad to have you here. The fact is, I have been torturing myself with doubts and questions which may appear to you uncalled for. I hope they are uncalled for. Indeed, to all appearance, everything is going on well. Yolande is in the brightest spirits, and is delighted with the place, and young Leslie seems very proud of her and affectionate. The only thing is whether I should not have put the whole facts of the case before him at the outset, and whether I am not bound in honor to do so, now, before the serious step of marriage is taken. I don't know. I am afraid to do it, and afraid of what might happen if I remain silent. There is a young man here, a Mr. Melville, who was Leslie's tutor, and who remains his intimate associate and friend. He is very highly respected about here, and, as I judge, seems to deserve the high opinion every one has of him. What I am thinking of now is the propriety of laying the whole affair before him, as Leslie's nearest friend. He knows the other members of the family also. I could trust him to give an honest opinion; and if he, knowing all the circumstances of the case, and knowing Leslie, and the ways of the family, were to think it unnecessary to break silence, then I might be fairly justified in letting the thing be as it is. Do you think so? But you will answer this question in person—not later than the 20th, I hope.

“For a long time I thought that if only Yolande were married and settled quietly in the country there would be no further need for anxiety; but now I can not keep from speculating on other possibilities, and wondering whether it would not be better to prevent any future ground of complaint and consequent unhappiness by telling the whole truth now. Surely that might be done without letting Yolande know. Why should she ever know?”

“If you can leave on the night of the 18th you will reach Inverness next forenoon, and catch the 3 P.M. boat down the Caledonian Canal. Most likely you will find Yolande waiting for you at the pier; she likes driving. Our prospects for the 20th are fairly good: there is more cover black game up those mountainous corries than I could have expected. We shoot all we find, as they don't stop here through the winter. On the 12th we had sixty-eight

brace grouse, one ptarmigan, one snipe, and a few mountain hares; on the 13th, seventy-one brace grouse, and also some hares; yesterday it was wet and wild, and we only went out for an hour or so in the afternoon—nine brace; to-day was fine, and we got sixty-two brace grouse and one and a half brace ptarmigan. Young Leslie is about the best all round shot I have ever seen—cool and certain. I think I get more nervous year by year; but then he is a capital hand at redeeming mistakes, and that gives me a little more confidence. A stag and three hinds passed close by the lodge late last night—at least so the shepherds say.

“I know you won’t mind my asking you to bring some little trifle or other for Yolande, just to show that you were thinking of her. She will meet you at Foyers pier.

“Yours faithfully,

G. R. WINTERBOURNE.”

CHAPTER XXII.

“IM WALD UND AUF DER HEIDE.”

NEXT morning there was a sudden call on Mr. Winterbourne to dismiss these fears and anxieties. The little community away up there in the solitude of the hills was suddenly thrown into violent commotion. A young gillie who had been wandering about had come running back to the bothy, declaring that he had seen a stag go into the wood just above the lodge, and of course the news was immediately carried to the house, and instantly the two gentlemen came out—Mr. Winterbourne eager and excited, the Master of Lynn not quite so sure of the truth of the report. Duncan, to tell the truth was also inclined to doubt; for this young lad had until the previous year been a deck hand on board the *Dunara Castle*, and knew a great deal more about skarts and sea-gulls than about stags. Moreover, the shepherds had been through the wood this same morning with their dogs. However, it was determined, after much hurried consultation, not to miss the chance if there was a chance. The day in any case, threatened to turn out badly the clouds were coming closer and closer down; to drive this wood would be a short and practicable undertaking that

would carry them on conveniently to lunch-time. And so it was finally arranged that Mr. Winterbourne should go away by himself to a station that he knew, commanding certain gullies that the stag, if there was a stag, would most likely make for; while the Master would stay behind, and, after a calculated interval, go through the wood with Duncan and the beaters.

In the midst of all this Miss Yolande suddenly made her appearance, in a short-skirted dress, thick boots, and deer-stalker's cap.

"What do *you* want?" her father said, abruptly, and with a stare.

"I am going with you," was her cool answer.

"Indeed you are not."

"Why not, then?"

"Women going deer-stalking!" he exclaimed. "What next?"

"Can I not be as quiet as any one? Why should I not go with you? I have climbed the hill many times, and I know very well where to hide, for Duncan showed me the place."

"Go spin, you jade, go spin!" her father said, as he shouldered the heavy rifle, and set off on the long and weary struggle up the hill.

Yolande turned to the Master.

"Is he not unkind!" she said, in a crestfallen way.

"If I were you," said he, laughing, "I would go all the same."

"Should I do any harm? Is it possible that I could do any harm?" she asked, quickly.

"Not a bit of it. What harm could you do? There is room for a dozen people to hide in that place; and if you keep your head just a little bit above the edge, and keep perfectly still, you will see the whole performance in the gully below. If there is a stag in the wood, and if I don't get a shot at him, he is almost sure to go up through the gullies. You won't scream, I suppose? And don't move: if you move a finger he will see you. And don't tumble into too many moss-holes, Yolande, when you are crossing the moor. And don't break your ankles in a peat-hag. And don't topple over the edge when you get to the gullies."

"Do you think you will frighten me? No; I am going as soon as papa is out of sight."

"Oh, you can't go wrong," said he, good-naturedly.

“The only thing is, when you get to the top of the hill, you might go on some three or four hundred yards before crossing the moor, so as to keep well back from the wood.”

“Oh yes, certainly,” said Yolande. “I understand very well.”

Accordingly, some little time thereafter, she set out on her self-imposed task; and she was fully aware that it was a fairly arduous one. Even here at the outset it was pretty stiff work; for the hill rose sheer away from the little plateau on which the lodge stood, and the ground was rugged in some parts and a morass in others, while there was an abundance of treacherous holes where the heather grew long among the rocks. But she had certain landmarks to guide her. At first there was a sheep track; then she made for two juniper bushes; then for certain conspicuous boulders; then, higher up, she came on a rough and stony face where the climbing was pretty difficult; then by the edge of a little hollow that had a tree or two in it and then, as she was now nearly at the top, and as there was a smooth boulder convenient, she thought she would sit down a minute to regain her breath. Far below her the lodge and its dependencies looked like so many small toyhouses; she could see the tiny figures of human beings moving about; in the perfect silence she could hear the whining of the dogs shut up in the kennel. Then one of those miniature figures waved something white; she returned the signal. Then she rose and went on again; she crossed a little burn; she passed along the edge of some steep gullies leading away down to the Corrie-an-Eich, that is, the Corrie of the Horses and finally, after some further climbing, she reached the broad, wide, open, undulating moorland, from which nothing was visible but a wilderness of bare and bleak mountain-top, all as silent as the grave.

She had been up here twice or thrice before; but she never came upon this scene of vast and voiceless desolation without being struck by a sort of terror. It seemed away out of the world. And on this morning a deeper gloom than usual hung over it; the clouds were low and heavy; there was a brooding stillness in the air. She was glad that some one had preceded her: the solitude of this place was terrible.

And now as she set out to cross the wild moorland she discovered that that was a much more serious undertaking than when she had a friendly hand to lend her assistance

from time to time. This wide plain of moss and bog and heather was intersected by a succession of peat-hags, the oozy black soil of which was much more easy to slide down into than to clamber out of. The Master of Lynn had taught her how to cross these hags; one step down, then a spring across then her right hand grasped by his right hand, then her elbow caught by his left hand, and she stood secure on the top of the other bank. But now, as she scrambled down the one side, so she had to scramble up the other, generally laying hold of a bunch of heather to help her; and as she was anxious not to lose her way, she made a straight course across this desert waste, and did not turn aside for drier or smoother ground, as one better acquainted with the moor might have done. However, she struggled on bravely. The first chill struck by that picture of desolation had gone. She was thinking more of the deer now. She hoped she would be up in time. She hoped her father would get a chance. And of course she made perfectly certain that if he did get a chance he would kill the stag; and then there would be a joyful procession back to the lodge, and a rare to-do among the servants and the gillies, with perhaps a dance in the evening to the skirl of Duncan's pipes.

All at once a cold wind began to blow; and about a minute thereafter she had no more idea of where she was than if she had been in the middle of the Atlantic. The whole world had been suddenly shut out from her; all she could see was a yard or two, either way, of the wet moss and heather. This gray cloud that had come along was raw to the throat and to the eyes; but it did not deposit much moisture on her clothes; its chief effect was the bewilderment of not seeing anything. And yet she thought she ought to go on. Perhaps she might get out of it. Perhaps the wind would carry it off. And so she kept on as straight as she could guess, but with much more caution, for at any moment she might fall into one of the deep holes worn by the streams in the peat, or into one of the moss-holes where the vegetation was so treacherously green.

But as she went on and on, and could find nothing that she could recognize, she grew afraid. Moreover, there was a roaring of a waterfall somewhere, which seemed to her louder than anything she had heard about there before. She began to wonder how far she had come, and to fear that in the mist she had lost her direction, and might be in

the immediate neighborhood of some dangerous precipice. And then, as she was looking all round her helplessly, her heart stood still with fright. There, away in that vague pall that encompassed her, stood the shadow, the ghost, of an animal, a large, visionary thing, motionless and noiseless, at a distance that she could not compute. And now she felt sure that that was the stag they were in search of; and, strangely enough, her agony of fear was not that she might by accident be shot through being in the neighborhood of the deer, but that she might by some movement on her part scare it away. She stood motionless, her heart now beating with excitement, her eyes fixed on this faint shade away in there, in the gray. It did not move. She kept her hands clinched by her side, so that she should not tremble. She dared not even sink into the heather and try to hide there. But the next moment she had almost screamed; for there was a hurried rushing noise behind her and as she (in spite of herself) wheeled round to face this new danger, a troop of phantoms went flying by—awful things they appeared to be until, just as they passed her, she recognized them to be humble and familiar sheep. Moreover, when she saw that other animal out there disappear along with them—the whole of them looming large and mysterious in this cloud-world—she made sure that that had been a sheep also, and she breathed more freely. Must not these animals have been disturbed by her father? Ought she not to make back in the direction from which they had come? To go any further forward she scarcely dared; the roar of water seemed perilously near.

As she thus stood, bewildered, uncertain, and full of a nameless dread, she saw before her a strange thing—a thing that added amazement to her terror—a belt of white, like a waterfall, that seemed to connect earth and sky. It was at an unknown distance, but it appeared to be perfectly vertical, and she knew that no such stupendous waterfall had she either seen before or heard of. That, then, that white water, was the cause of the roaring noise. And then she bethought her of a saying of Archie Leslie that tales were told of people having gone into this wilderness and never having been heard of again; but that there was one sure way of escape for any one who got astray—to follow any one of the streams. That, he had said, must sooner or later lead you down to Allt-nam-Ba. But when she thought of going away over to that white torrent, and seeking to

follow its course down through chasm after chasm, she shuddered. For one who knew the country intimately—for a man who could jump from boulder to boulder, and swing himself from bush to bush—it might be possible; for her it was impossible. Nor was there the slightest use in her trying to go back the way she came. She had lost all sense of direction; there was nothing to give her a clue; she was absolutely helpless.

But fortunately she had the good sense to stand still and to consider her position with such calmness as she could muster; and that took time, insensibly to herself, the clouds around were growing thinner. Then she noticed that the upper part of that awe-inspiring torrent had receded very considerably—that the white line was no longer vertical, but seemed to stretch back into the distance. Then the moorland visible around her began to grow more extended. Here and there faint visions of hills appeared. And then a flood of joyful recognition broke over her. That awful torrent was nothing but the familiar Allt-cam-Ban,* its brawling white stream not vertical at all, but merely winding down from the far heights of the hills. She had come too far certainly; but now she knew that the gullies she was in search of were just behind her, and that her father's hiding-place was not more than three hundred yards distant. The cloud that had encompassed her was now trailing along the face of the hill opposite her; the gloomy landscape was clear in all its features. With a light heart she tripped along, over heather, across hags, through sopping moss, until behind a little barricade which Nature had formed at the summit of a precipice overlooking certain ravines—a little box, as it were, that looked as if it had been dug out for the very purpose of deer-slaying—she found her father quietly standing, and cautiously peering over the ledge.

When he heard her stealthy approach he quickly turned; then he motioned her to stoop down and come to him. This she did very cautiously and breathlessly, and presently she was standing beside him, on a spot which enabled her to look down into the gullies beneath. These certainly formed a most admirable deer-trap, if ever there was one. The place consisted of a series of little hills or lumps, probably not more than 150 feet in height, with sheer smooth slopes, here and there lightly wooded, but mostly covered

* The White Winding Water.

with heather. The gullies between those lumps, again, came to a point in a ravine just underneath where Yolande was standing; so that, whichever way the deer came, they were almost certain to make up the steep face just opposite this station, and so give the rifleman an excellent chance. Yolande took out her housekeeper's note-book, and wrote on the fly-leaf:

"Have you seen anything?"

He shook his head, and motioned to her to put the book away. It was not a time for trifling. If there were a stag in the unseer woods beyond, it might make its sudden appearance in this silent little ravine at any moment, and might make for the top by some quite unexpected track. He kept his eyes on the watch all along the gullies; but his head was motionless. Yolande too was eager and anxious—but only for a while. As time passed she grew listless. This solitude seemed always to have been a solitude. There was no sign of life in it. Doubtless the young lad had been deceived. And then she grew to thinking of the strange sight she saw in the mist, when the waters of the Allt-camban seemed to be one foaming white vertical torrent.

Then a shock came to her eyes—a living thing suddenly appeared in that empty solitude; and at once she clinched her hands. She knew what was expected of her. She remained rigid as a stone; she would not even raise her head to see if her father saw. She kept her eyes on this startling feature in the landscape; she held her breath; she was mainly conscious of a dim fear that this animal that was coming over that hillock at such a speed was not a deer at all, but a fox. It was of a light reddish-brown color. Then it had not come up any of the gullies, as she had been told to expect; it had come right over the top of the little hill, with a long, sinuous stride; and now it was descending again into the ravine. But here she saw it was a deer. Once out of the long heather, and coming nearer too, it was clear that this was a deer. But surely small? Where were the great horns? Or was it a hind? She knew rather than saw that her father twice aimed his rifle at this animal, whatever it was, as it sped across an open space at the bottom of the ravine. Of course all this happened in a few seconds, and she had just begun to think that the animal had horns, and was a roebuck, when the lithe, red, sinuous, silent object disappeared altogether behind a ridge. Still

she did not move. She did not express disappointment. She would not turn her head.

Then she knew that her father had quickly passed her and jumped on a clump of heather whence he could get a better view. She followed. The next thing she saw, clear against the sky, and not more than a hundred and twenty yards off, was the head of a deer, the horns thrown back, the nostrils high in the air. The same instant her father fired; and that strange object (which very much frightened her) disappeared. She saw her father pause for a second to put a fresh cartridge in his rifle and then away he hurried to the place where the deer had passed; and so she thought she might safely follow. She found her father searching all about, but more particularly studying the peat-hags.

"I do believe I hit him," he said (and there was considerable vexation in his tone). "Look about, Yolande. He must have crossed the peat somewhere. If he is wounded, he may not have gone far. It was only a roebuck—still—such a chance! Confound it, I believe I've missed him clean!"

He was evidently grievously mortified, and she was sorry, for she knew he would worry about it afterward; smaller trifles than that made him fidget. But all their searching was in vain. The peat-hags here were narrow: a frightened deer would clear them.

"If he is wounded, papa, Duncan and the dogs will go after him."

"Oh no," said he, moodily; "I believe I missed him clean. If he had been hit he couldn't have got away so fast. Of course it was only a buck—still—"

"But, papa, it was a most difficult shot. I never saw any creature go at such a pace; and you only saw him for a moment."

"Yes, and for that moment he looked as big as a cow against the sky. Nobody but an idiot could have missed the thing."

"Oh, you need not try to make me believe you are a bad shot," said she proudly. "No. Every one knows better than that. I know what Mr. Leslie tells me. And I suppose the very best shot in the world misses sometimes."

"Well, there is no use waiting here," said he. "Of course there was no stag. The stag that idiot of a boy saw was this roebuck. If there were a stag, the noise of the

shot must have driven him off. Why the mischief I did not fire when he was crossing the gully I don't understand! I had my rifle up twice—"

"Papa," said she, suddenly, "what is that?"

She was looking away down into the ravine beneath them—at a dusky red object that was lying in a patch of green bracken. He followed the direction of her eyes.

"Why, surely—yes, it is, Yolande—that is the buck, he must have fallen backward and rolled right down to the bottom—"

"And you said you were such a bad shot, papa!"

"Oh, that is no such prize," he said (but he spoke a good deal more cheerfully); "what I wonder is whether the poor beast is dead; I suppose he must be."

"There they come—there they come—look!" she said; and she was far more excited and delighted than he was. "There is the red gillie at the top, and Duncan coming along by the hollow—and there is Archie—"

She took out her handkerchief and waved it in the air.

"Don't, Yolande," said he. "They'll think we've got a stag."

"We've got all the stag there was to get," said she, proudly. "And you said you were not a good shot—to shoot a roebuck running at such a pace!"

"You are the most thorough going flatterer, Yolande," he said, laughing (but he was very much pleased all the same). "Why, he wasn't going at all just at the crest—he stopped to sniff the air—"

"But you could only have seen him for the fiftieth part of a second: isn't that the same as running?"

At this moment a voice was heard from below, where a little group of figures had collected round the buck. It was the Master of Lynn who was looking up to them.

"A very fine head sir," he called.

"There, didn't I tell you?" she said proudly, though she had never told him anything of the kind. And then in the excitement of the moment she forgot that she had never revealed to her father that little arrangement about the whiskey that the Master had suggested to her.

"Duncan," she called down to them.

"Yes, miss."

"When you go back home, you will let the beaters have a glass of whiskey each."

"Very well, miss," he called back; and then he pro-

ceeded with the slinging of the buck round the shoulders of the red-headed gillie.

"Archie," she called again.

"Yes."

"If you are back at the lodge first, wait for us. We shall be there in time for lunch."

"All right."

She was very proud and pleased as they trudged away home again over the wild moorland. For her part she could see no difference between a roe-deer and a red-deer, except that the former (as she declared) was a great deal pleasanter to eat, as she hoped she would be able to show them. And was it not a far more difficult thing to hit a deer of the size of a roebuck than to hit a stag as tall as a horse?

"Flatterer, flatterer," he said, but he was mightily well pleased all the same; and indeed to see Yolande gay and cheerful like this was of itself quite enough for him; so that for the time he forgot all his anxieties and fears.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A CONFIDANT.

ONE evening John Shortlands and Jack Melville were together standing at the door of the lodge, looking down the glen at the very singular spectacle there presented. The day had been dull and overclouded, and seemed about to sink into an equally gloomy evening, when suddenly, at sunset, the western heavens broke into a flame of red; and all at once the stream flowing down through the valley became one sheet of vivid pink fire, only broken here and there by the big blocks of granite in its channel, which remained of a pale and ghostly gray.

The big, burly M. P., however, did not seem wholly occupied with this transfiguration of the heavens. He looked vexed, perturbed, impatient.

"Mr. Melville," he said, abruptly, in his broad Northumbrian intonation, "will you walk down the glen for a bit?"

“Yes; but we should fetch Miss Winterbourne to show her the skies on fire.”

“No; it’s about her I want to speak to you. Come along.”

“About her?” he repeated, with the large clear gray eyes showing some astonishment.

“Or rather,” said his companion, when they had got as far as the bridge, “about her father. Winterbourne is an old friend of mine, and I won’t just call him an ass; but the way he is going on at present, shilly-shallying, frightened to say this, frightened to say that, is enough to worry a far stronger man than he is into his grave. Well, if he won’t speak, I will. Dang it, I hate mystery! My motto is—Out with it! And he would never have got into this precious mess if he had taken my advice all through.”

Melville was surprised, but he did not interrupt. John Shortlands seemed a trifle angry.

“The immediate trouble with him is this: Ought he or ought he not to confide certain matters to you as a friend of young Leslie? Well, I am going to take that into my own hand. I am going to tell you the whole story—and a miserable business it is.”

“Do you think that is wise?” the younger man said calmly. “If there is anything disagreeable, shouldn’t the knowledge of it be kept to as few people as possible? I would rather have my illusions left. The Winterbournes have been kind to me since they came here, and it has been delightful to me to look at these two—the spectacle of father and daughter.”

“Oh, but I have nothing to say against either of them—God forbid!—except that Winterbourne has been a confounded ass, as it seems to me; or perhaps I should say as it used to seem to me. Well, now, I suppose you know that your friend Leslie and Yolande are engaged?”

“I have understood as much.”

“But did he not tell ye?” said Shortlands, with a stare.

“Well, yes,” the other said, in rather a cold way. “But we did not have much talk about it. Archie Leslie is a very fine fellow; but he and I don’t always agree in our ways of looking at things.”

“Then, at all events, in order to disagree, you must know what his way of looking at things is; and that is just the point I’m coming to,” said Shortlands, in his blunt, dogmatic kind of way. “Just this, that Yolande Winter-

bourne has been brought up all her life to believe that her mother died when she was a child; whereas the mother is not dead, but very much alive—worse luck; and the point is whether he ought to be told; and whether he is a sensible sort of chap, who would make no fuss about it, and who would see that it could not matter much to him; and, above all, whether he would consent to keep this knowledge back from Yolande, who would only be shocked and horrified by it. Do ye understand? I think I have put it plain—that is, from Winterbourne's point of view."

"But, surely," exclaimed Melville, with wide-open eyes—"surely the best thing, surely the natural thing, would be to tell the girl herself, first of all!"

"Man alive! Winterbourne would rather cut his throat. Don't you see that his affection for the girl is quite extraordinary? It is the sole passion of his life: a needle scratch on Yolande's finger is like a knife to his heart. I assure you the misery he has endured in keeping this secret is beyond anything I can tell you; and I do believe he would go through the whole thing again just that Yolande's mind should be free, happy, and careless. Mind you, it was not done through any advice of mine. No; nor was it Winterbourne either who began it; it was his sister. The child was given to her charge when she was about two or three years old, I fancy. Then they were living in Lincolnshire; afterward they went to France, and the aunt died there. It was she who brought Yolande up to believe her mother dead; and then Winterbourne put off and put off telling her—although twenty times I remonstrated with him—until he found it quite impossible. He couldn't do it. Sometimes when I look at her now I scarcely wonder. She seems such a radiant kind of a creature that I doubt whether I could bring myself to tell her that story—no, I could not—dang it! I could not. And even when I was having rows with Winterbourne, and telling him what an ass he was, and telling him that the torture he was going through was quite unnecessary, why, man, I thought there was something fine in it too; and again and again I have watched him when he would sit and look at Yolande and listen to all her nonsense, and have seen his face just filled with pleasure to see her so happy and careless, and then I thought he had his moments of recompense also. When he goes about with her he forgets all that worry—thank goodness for that! and certainly she is high-spirited enough for anything.

You would think she had never known a care or a trouble in all her existence; and I suppose that's about the truth."

John Shortlands had grown quite eloquent about Yolande—although, indeed, he was not much of an orator in the House; and his companion listened in silence—in a profound reverie, in fact. At last he said slowly,—

"I suppose there is no necessity that I should know why the girl has been kept in ignorance of her mother's existence?"

"Oh, I will tell you the story—miserable as it is. Well, it is a sad story, too; for you can not imagine a pleasanter creature than that was when Winterbourne married her. He was older than she was, but not much: he looks a good deal older now than he really is: those years have told on him. It was neuralgia that began it; she suffered horribly. Then some idiot advised her to drink port-wine—I suppose the very worst thing she could have tried, for if it is bad for gout, it must be bad for rheumatism and neuralgia and such things; at least I should think so. However, it soothed her at first, I suppose, and no doubt she took refuge in it whenever a bad attack came on. But, mind you, it was not that that played the mischief with her. She did take too much—I suppose she had to go on increasing the doses—but she had not destroyed her self-control; for quite suddenly she went to her husband, who had suspected nothing of the kind, told him frankly that the habit was growing on her, and declared her resolution to break the thing off at once. She did that. I firmly believe she did keep her resolution to the letter. But then the poor wretch had worse and worse agony to bear, and then it was that somebody or other—it wasn't Winterbourne, and he knew nothing about it—recommended her to try small doses of opium—as a sort of medicine, don't ye see. I think it was opium, for I am not sure whether chlorodyne was in use just then; but all events it was chlorodyne soon afterward: and it seems miraculous how women can go on destroying themselves with those infernal drugs without being found out. I don't know whether Winterbourne would ever have found it out; for he is an indulgent sort of chap, and he was very fond of her; but one night there was a scene at dinner. Then he discovered the whole thing. The child was sent away for fear of further scenes, and this so terrified the mother that she made the most solemn promises never to touch the poison again. But by this time—here is the

mischief of those infernal things—her power of self-control had been affected. Man alive! I can't tell ye what Winterbourne had to go through. His patience with her was superhuman; and always the promise held out to her was that Yolande was to be restored to her, and sometimes she succeeded so well that every one was hopeful, and she seemed to have quite recovered. Then again there would be another relapse, and a wild struggle to conceal it from the friends of the family, and all the rest of it. What a life he has led all those years, trying to get her to live in some safe retreat or other, and then suddenly finding that she had broken out again, and gone to some people—Romneys or Romfords the name is—who have a most pernicious influence over her, and can do anything with her when she is in that semi-maudlin state! Of course they use her to extort money from Winterbourne; and she has drugged half her wits away; and it is easy for them to persuade her that she has been ill-treated about Yolande. Then she will go down to the House, or hunt him out at his lodgings. Oh, I assure you, I can't tell you what has been going on all these years. There is only one fortunate thing—that the Romfords are not aware of the terror in which he lives of Yolande getting to know the truth, or else they would put the screw on a good deal more forcibly, I reckon. As for her, poor woman, she has no idea of asking for money for herself; in fact, she has plenty. It is not a question of money with Winterbourne. His dread is that she might stumble on them accidentally, and Yolande have to be told. That is why he has consented to her remaining all these years in France, though his only delight is in her society. That is why he won't let her live in London, but would rather put himself to any inconvenience by her living elsewhere. That is why he looks forward with very fair composure to a separation: Yolande living in peace and quiet in this neighborhood here, and he left in London to take his chance of a stone being thrown through his window at any hour of the day or night."

"But that terrorism is perfectly frightful!"

"How are you to avoid it?" said Shortlands, coolly. "There is the one way, of course—there is the heroic remedy. Tell Yolande the whole story; and then, the next time the stone is thrown, summon the police, give the woman in charge, bind her over in recognizances, and have all your

names in the next day's paper. Some men could do that. Winterbourne couldn't; he hasn't the nerve.'

The answer to that was a strange one. It was a remark, or rather an exclamation, that Melville seemed to make almost to himself.

"My God! not one of them appears to see what ought to be done!"

But the remark was overheard.

"What would you do, then?"

"I?" said Melville—and John Shortlands did not observe that the refined, intellectual face of his companion grew a shade paler as he spoke—"I? I would go straight to the girl herself, and I would say, 'That is the condition in which your mother is: it is your duty to go and save her.'"

"Then let me tell you this, Mr. Melville," said Shortlands, quite as warmly, "rather than bring such shame and horror and suffering on his daughter, George Winterbourne would cut off his fingers one by one. Why, man, you don't understand what that girl is to him—his very life! Besides, everything has been tried. You don't suppose the mother would have been allowed to sink to that state without every human effort being made to save her; and always Yolande herself held out to her as the future reward. Now we must be getting back, I think. But I wish you would think over what I have told you, and let Winterbourne have your opinion as to whether all this should be declared to your friend Leslie. Winterbourne's first idea was that if Yolande were married and settled in the country—especially in such a remote neighborhood as this—there would be no heed to tell even her husband about it. It could not concern them. But now he is worrying himself to death about other possibilities. Supposing something disagreeable were to happen in London, and the family name get into the paper, then Yolande's husband might turn round and ask why it had been concealed from him. That might be unpleasant, you know. If he were not considerate, he might put the blame on her. The fact is, Winterbourne has had his nervous system so pulled to pieces by all this fear and secrecy and anxiety that he exaggerates things tremendously, and keeps speculating on dangers never likely to occur. Why, he can't shoot half as well as he used to; he is always imagining something is going to happen, and he does not take half his chances,

just for fear of missing, and being mortified after. He has not had a pleasant time of it these many years."

They turned now, and leisurely made their way back to the lodge. The red sunset still flared up the glen; but now it was behind them, and it was a soft warm color that they saw spreading over the heather slopes of the hills, and the wooded corries, and the little plateau between the convergent steams.

"May I ask your own opinion, Mr. Shortlands," said Melville, after a time, "as to whether this thing should be kept back from Leslie?"

"Well, I should say that would depend pretty much on his character," was the answer, "and as to that I know very little. My own inclination would be for having a frank disclosure all round; but still I see what Winterbourne has to say for himself, and I can not imagine how the existence of this poor woman could concern either your friend Leslie or his wife. Probably they would never hear a word of her. She can't live long. She must have destroyed her constitution completely. Poor wretch! one can't help pitying her; and at the same time, you know, it would be a great relief if she were dead, both to herself and her relatives. Of course, if Mr. Leslie were a finical sort of person—I am talking in absolute confidence, you know, and in ignorance as well—he might make some objection; but if he were a man with a good sound base of character, he would say, 'Well, what does that matter to me?' and he would have some consideration for what Mr. Winterbourne has gone through in order to keep this trouble concealed from the girl, and would himself be as willing to conceal it from her."

"Don't you think," said Melville, after a minute's pause, "that the mere fact that he might make some objection is a reason why he should be informed at once?"

"Is he an ass?" said John Shortlands, bluntly. "Is he a worrying sort of creature?"

"Oh, not at all. He is remarkably sensible—very sensible. He will take a perfectly calm view of the situation: you may depend on that."

"Other things being equal, I am for his being told—most distinctly. If he has common-sense, there need be no trouble. On the other hand, you know, if you should think we are making a fuss where none is necessary, I have a notion that Winterbourne would be satisfied by your judgment, as an intimate friend of Leslie's."

"But that is putting rather a serious responsibility on me. Supposing it is decided to say nothing about the matter, then I should be in the awkward position of knowing something affecting Leslie's domestic affairs of which he would be ignorant."

"Undoubtedly. I quite see that. But if you are afraid of accepting the responsibility, there's an easy way out of it. I will go and tell it myself, and have it over. I have already broken away from Winterbourne's shilly-shallying by speaking to you; he would never have done it, and he is worrying himself into his grave. He is a timid and sensitive fellow. He now thinks he should have told the Master, as he calls him, when he first proposed for Yolande, and perhaps it might have been better to do so; but I can see how he was probably well inclined to the match for various reasons, and anxious not to put any imaginary stumbling-block in the way. But now if you were to go to him and say, 'Well, I have heard the whole story. It can't concern either Yolande or her future husband. Forget the whole thing, and don't worry any more about it, I do believe he would recover his peace of mind, for he has confidence in your judgment.'"

"It would be rather a serious thing."

"I know it."

"I must take time to turn the matter over."

"Oh, certainly."

They had now reached the bridge, and happening to look up they saw that Yolande had come to the door of the lodge, and was standing there, and waving a handkerchief to them as a sign to make haste. And what a pretty picture she made as she stood there!—the warm light from the west aglow upon the tall English-looking figure clad in a light-hued costume, and giving color to the fair, freckled face, and the ruddy gold aureole of her hair. Melville's eyes lighted up with pleasure at the very sight of her; it was but natural—she was like a vision.

"Ah," said she, shaking her finger at them as they went up the path, "you are wicked men. Seven minutes late already; and if the two-pounder that Mr. Melville brought for me has fallen all to pieces you must have yourselves to blame—that is true."

"I wish, Miss Winterbourne," said Jack Melville, "that some noble creature would give me a day's salmon-fishing. Then I could bring you something better than loch trout."

“Oh no,” she answered imperiously, “I will not have anything said against the loch trout. No, I am sure there is nothing ever so good as what you get from your own place—nothing. Papa says that never, never did he have such cutlets as those from the roe-deer that he shot last week.”

“I can tell you, Miss Yolande,” said John Shortlands, “that others besides your father fully appreciated those cutlets. The whole thing depends on whether you have got a smart young housekeeper; and I have it in my head now that I am going to spend the rest of my days at Allnam-Ba; and I will engage you, on your own terms—name them; you shall have the money down; and then I will have Duncan compose a march for me; why should it be always ‘Melville’s Welcome Home’?”

“But you are also to have the ‘Barren Rocks of Aden’ to-night,” said she, brightly. “I told Duncan it was your favorite. Now come along—come along—oh, dear me! it is ten minutes late!”

Jack Melville was rather silent that night at dinner. And always—when he could make perfectly certain that her eyes were cast down, or turned in the direction of John Shortlands or of her father—he was studying Yolande’s face; and sometimes he would recall the phrase that Mrs. Bell had used on the first occasion she had seen this young lady, or rather, immediately after parting with her, “She’s a braw lass, that; I fear she will make some man’s heart sore;” and then again he kept wondering and speculating as to what possible strength of will and womanly character there might lie behind those fair, soft, girlish features.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A PEACEMAKER.

PRETTY Mrs. Graham was standing in her room at Inverstroy, ready to go out; her husband was in the adjacent dressing-room, engaged in the operation of shaving.

“You need not be afraid, Jim,” said the young matron; “everything has been arranged. Everything will go quite

right till I come back. And Archie is to meet me at Fort Augustus, so that the ponies won't have the long pull up Glendoe."

"Why can't he manage his own affairs?" the stout warrior grumbled.

"Aunt Colquhoun isn't easy to get on with," she said. "And I am beginning to feel anxious. What would you say to his getting spiteful, and running away with *Shena Van*?"

"Stuff!"

"Oh, I don't know. If I chose I could show you something I cut out of the *Inverness Courier* about three years ago. Well, I will show it to you."

She went to a drawer in her wardrobe, and hunted about for a time until she found the newspaper cutting, which she brought back and put before him on the dressing-table. This was what he took up and read,—

"FOR SHENA'S NEW-YEAR'S DAY MORNING

"Her eyes are dark and soft and blue,
She's light-stepped as the roe :
O Shena, Shena, my heart is true
To you where'er you go.

"I wish that I were by the rills
Above the Allt-cam-ban ;
And wandering with me o'er the hills,
My own dear Shena Van.

"Far other sights and scenes I view:
The year goes out in snow :
O Shena, Shena, my heart is true
To you where'er you go."

"Well," said he, contemptuously throwing down again the piece of paper, "you don't suppose Archie wrote that rubbish? That isn't his line."

"It's a line that most lads take at a certain age," said Mrs. Graham, shrewdly.

"More likely some moonstruck ploughboy!" her husband interjected; for indeed he did not seem to think much of those verses, which she regarded with some fondness.

"I am afraid," said she, looking at the lines, "that the ploughboys in this part of the world don't know quite as much English as all that comes to. And how many people

do you think now, Jim, have ever heard of the Allt-camban? And then *Shena*, how many people have ever heard of Janet Stewart's nickname? There is another thing. Those verses appeared when Archie was at Edinburgh, and of course he knew very well that, although he was not allowed to write to her, the *Inverness Courier* will make its way into the manse. I think they are very pretty.

‘O Shena, Shena, my heart is true
To you where'er you go.’

That is the worst of marrying an old man. *They* never write poetry about you.”

“You call that poetry!” he said.

“Well, good-by, Jim. I will tell Mackenzie when he is to meet me at Fort Augustus.”

“Bring back Yolande Winterbourne with you,” said Colonel Graham, who had now about finished his toilette.

“How can I, without asking her father? And there wouldn't be room.”

“I don't want her father. I want her. There is no fun in having a whole houseful of married women.”

“I quite agree with you. And who wanted them? Certainly not I. There is only one thing more absurd than having nothing but married women in the house, and that is having nothing but married men. But you have had a warning this year, Jim. Everybody acknowledges that there never was such bad shooting. I hope another year you will get one or two younger men who know what shooting is, and who can climb. Well, good-by, Jim.” And presently pretty Mrs. Graham was seated in a light little wagonette of polished oak, the reins in her hand, and a pair of stout little ponies trotting away down through the wooded and winding deeps of Glenstroy.

It was a long drive to Fort Augustus; and although from time to time a refrain went echoing through her head,—

“O Shena, Shena, my heart is true
To you where'er you go,”

and apparently connecting itself somehow with the pattering of the horses' feet on the road, still her brain was far from being idle. This expedition was entirely of her own proper choice and motion. In truth she had been alarmed by the very fact that the Master of Lynn had ceased to wish

for her interference. He had refused to urge his case further. If the people at Lynn Towers were blind to their own interests, they might remain so. He was not going to argue and stir up domestic dissension. He would not allow Yolande's name to be drawn into any such brawl; and certainly he would not suffer any discussion of herself or her merits. All this Mrs. Graham gathered vaguely from one or two letters, and as she considered the situation as being obviously dangerous, she had, at great inconvenience to herself, left her house full of guests, and was now about to see what could be done at Lynn Towers.

When she reached Fort Augustus, Archie Leslie was waiting for her there at the hotel, and she found him in the same mood. He did not wish to have anything said about the matter. He professed to be indifferent. He assumed that his sister had come on an ordinary filial visit, and he had luncheon ready for her. He said she was looking prettier than ever; and was anxious to know whether they had done well with the shooting at Investroy.

"Now look here, Archie," said she, when the waiter had finally left the room, "let us understand each other. You know what I have come about—at some trouble to myself. There is no use in your making the thing more difficult than needs be. And you know perfectly well that matters cannot remain as they are."

"I know perfectly well that matters cannot remain as they are," he repeated, with some touch of irony, "for this excellent reason, that in the course of time the Winterbournes will be going south, and that as Mr. Winterbourne has never been within the doors of Lynn Towers, and isn't likely to be, he will draw his own conclusions. Probably he has done so already. I haven't seen much of him since his friend Shortlands came. Very likely he already understands why our family have taken no notice of them, and I know he is too proud a man to allow his daughter to be mixed up in any domestic squabble. They will go south. That will be—Good-by."

"But, my dear Master," his sister protested, "if you would only show a little conciliation—"

"What!" he said, indignantly. "Do you think I am going to beg for an invitation for Mr. Winterbourne? Do you expect me to go and ask that Yolande should be received at Lynn Towers? I think not! I don't quite see my way to that yet."

"You needn't be angry—"

"But it is so absurd!" he exclaimed. "What have Winterbourne's politics to do with Yolande? Supposing he wanted to blow up the House of Lords with dynamite, what has that got to do with her? It is Burke's *Peerage* that is at the bottom of all this nonsense. If every blessed copy of that book were burned out of the world, they wouldn't have another word to say. It is the fear of seeing 'daughter of Mr. Winterbourne, M. P. for Slagpool,' that is setting them crazy. That comes of living out of the world; that comes of being toadied by gillies and town councillors. But I am not going to trouble about it," said he, with a sudden air of indifference. "I am not going to make a fuss. They can go their way; I can go mine."

"Yes, and the Winterbournes will go theirs," said his sister, sharply.

"Very well."

"But it is not very well; it is very ill. Come now, Archie, be reasonable. You know the trouble I had before I married Jim; it was got over by a little patience and discretion."

"Oh, if you think I am going to cringe and crawl about for their consent, you are quite mistaken. I would not put Yolande Winterbourne into such a position. Why," said he, with some sense of injury in his tone, "I like the way they talk—as if they were asked to sacrifice something! If there is any sacrifice in the case, it seems to me that I am making it, not they. I am doing what I think best for Lynn, that has always been starved for want of money. Very well; if they don't like it, they can leave it alone. I am not going to beg for any favor in the matter."

"It might be as well not to talk of any sacrifice," said his sister, quietly, and yet with some significance. "I don't think there will be much sacrifice. Well, now, I'm ready, Archie: what have you brought—the dogcart?"

"Yes."

Shortly thereafter they set out for Lynn; and they did not resume this conversation; for as they had to climb the steep road leading into Glendoe, the Master got down and walked, leaving the reins to his sister. They passed through the deep woods, and up and out on to the open heights. They skirted the solitary little lake that lies in a mountain-cup up there. And then, in due time, they came in sight of the

inland country—a board and variegated plain, with here and there a farmhouse or village.

They came in sight of something else too—the figure of a young woman who was coming along the road. Mrs. Graham's eyes were fixed on that solitary person for some time before she exclaimed,—

“Archie, do you see who that is?”

“Of course I do,” said he, not with the best grace.

“It is she, isn't it?” she said, eagerly.

“I suppose you can see that for yourself,” was the answer.

“Perhaps it isn't the first time to-day that you have met her?” said she, looking up with a quick scrutiny.

“If you want to know, I have not set eyes on her since last Christmas. She has been living in Inverness.”

He pulled up. This young lady whom they now stopped to speak to was a good-looking girl of about twenty, with light brown hair and very dark blue eyes. There was some firmness and shrewdness of character in the face, despite the shyness that was also very visible there. For the rest, she was neatly dressed—in something of a town style.

She merely nodded to the Master, who took off his hat; but as she was on Mrs. Graham's side of the dog cart, she shook hands with that lady, and her bright, fresh-colored upturned face had something of diffidence or self-consciousness in it.

“Oh, how do you do, Miss Stewart? It is such a long time since I have seen you?” said Mrs. Graham.

“You do not come often to Lynn now, Mrs. Graham,” said Miss Stewart, with just a touch of a very pretty accent, “and I have been living in Inverness.”

“Oh, indeed. And how are the people at the manse?”

They chatted in the ordinary fashion for a few minutes, and then the Master of Lynn drove on again—in silence. Mrs. Graham ventured to repeat, apparently to herself, though he must have overheard,

“And wandering with me o'er the hills,
My own dear Shena Van ;”

but if he did overhear, he took no notice, and certainly he betrayed neither confusion nor annoyance. Perhaps the verses were not his, after all? The minister's daughter was the belle of those parts; she had had many admirers;

and the *Inverness Courier* was the natural medium for the expression of their woes. Still, Mrs. Graham asked herself how many people in the world knew of the existence of the Allt-cam-Ban, far away in the solitudes over Allt-nam-ba.

Mrs. Graham, as it turned out, had a terrible time of it with her father. This short, thickset man with the voluminous brown and gray beard, shaggy eyebrows, and bald head surmounted by a black velvet skull-cap, was simply furious; and so far from being affected in any degree by his daughter's blandishments, he seemed inclined to direct his wrath upon her as the chief aider and abettor of her brother's high treason. Nor was his lordship's language marked by much gentleness or reticence.

"The idea," he exclaimed, "that Dochfour, and Lochiel, and Culloden, and the rest of them, might have to rub shoulders with a low, scoundrelly Radical! The mere chance of such a thing happening is monstrous."

"I beg to remind you, papa," said Mrs. Graham, with her face grown a little pale, "that my husband is not in the habit of associating with low scoundrels of any kind. And I would rather not hear such things said about the father of my particular friend."

Then she saw that that line would not do.

"Papa," she pleaded, "a little civility costs nothing. Why should you not call? You must have known it was this Mr. Winterbourne who had taken the shooting when we telegraphed you from Malta."

"I must have known? I did know! What has that to do with it? I do not let my friendship with my shootings. What my tenant may be is nothing to me, so long as he can pay; and he is welcome to everything he can find on the shooting; but it does not follow he is entitled to sit down at my table, or that I shall sit down at his."

"But you were very kind to Yolande Winterbourne when she came up at first, and you knew whose daughter she was," pretty Mrs. Graham pleaded again.

"I did not know that that young jackass proposed to make her one of the family—it is too great an honor altogether."

"You know, papa, it is such a pity to make trouble when it is not likely to help. Archie can marry whom he pleases—"

"Let him, and welcome!" said this fierce old gentle-

man. "He can marry whom he pleases, but he cannot compel me to associate with his wife's father."

She went away somewhat crestfallen, and sought out the Master, whom she found in one of the greenhouses.

"Well?" said he, with a smile, for he had anticipated the result.

"His lordship does seem opinionated about it," she had to confess. "And yet I think I could talk him over if only Aunt Colquhoun were absent. I suppose she will be back from Foyers by dinner-time."

"I wish she were sewn in a sack, and at the bottom of Loch Ness," said he.

"Archie, for shame! You see," she added, thoughtfully, "I must get back to Fort Augustus by four to-morrow afternoon. And I haven't come all this way without being resolved to see Yolande before I go. That leaves me little time. But still— Have you asked Mr. Melville to speak to papa?"

"No. Jack Melville and I nearly quarrelled over it, so I dropped the subject. He doesn't understand matters, don't you know, Polly; he doesn't understand what the improvement of a poor estate costs. He has forgotten his Horace—*pennis non homini datis*—that means that human beings aren't born with enough money. He made quite a fuss when I showed him that there were prudential reasons for the match, as if there were any use in blinding one's eyes to obvious facts. Well, I don't care. I have done my best. My intentions toward Lynn were sincere and honorable; now they can make a hash of the whole thing if they like."

"It is folly speaking like that," his sister said, sharply. "Surely you have too much spirit to yield to a little opposition of this kind."

"A little opposition!" he said, with a laugh. "It's about as bulky as Borlum Hill; and I for one am not going to ram my head against it. I prefer a quiet life."

"But you are bound in honor to Yolande Winterbourne not to let the engagement cease," she cried. "Why, to think of such a thing! You ask a girl to marry you; she consents; and then you throw her over because this person or that person objects. Well, I never heard of one of the Leslies acting that way before. I was only a girl, but I showed them what stuff I was made of when they tried to interfere with me."

"Oh, but that's different," he said, coolly. "Girls are romantic creatures. They rather like a shindy. Whereas men prefer a quiet life."

"Well, I never heard the like of that—"

"Wait a minute. I am going to talk to you plainly, Polly," said he. "I wanted to marry Janet Stewart; and I dare say she would have had me if I had definitely asked her—"

"I dare say she would."

"Oh, you think she hasn't as much pride as anybody else because she is only a minister's daughter? That is all you know about her. However, they all made such a row, and you especially, that I consented to let the affair go. No doubt that was wise. I was young. She had no money, and Lynn wanted money. Very well. I made no objection. But you will observe, my dear Miss Polly, that when these stumbling-blocks are again and again put into the road, even the most patient of animals may begin to get fractious, and might even kick over the traces. At present I hope I am not in a rage. But I am older now than I was then, and not in the least bit inclined to be made a fool of."

"And do you really mean to say," said Mrs. Graham, with her pretty dark gray eyes regarding him with astonishment, "that you are deliberately prepared to jilt Yolande Winterbourne merely on account of this little difficulty?"

"It isn't my doing," said he. "Besides, they seem bent on piling up about three cart-loads of difficulty. Life isn't long enough to begin and shovel that away. And if they don't want to have Corrievreak back, I dare say Sir John will be quite willing to keep it."

"I don't think I will speak to papa again until after dinner," said she, musingly. "Then I will have another try—with Corrievreak."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE AMBASSADOR.

Now Jack Melville, or Melville of Monaglen, as Mrs. Bell (with her own dark purposes always in view) proudly preferred to call him, had not only decided that the Master of Lynn should know that Yolande's mother was alive, but he had also undertaken himself to tell him all the facts of the case, to Mr. Winterbourne's great relief. Accordingly, one afternoon he gave the school-children a half-holiday, and walked over to Lynn. He met the Master at the wooden bridge adjoining Lynn Towers, and also the dog-cart conveying Mrs. Graham back to Fort Augustus.

"There she goes," said young Leslie, sardonically, as he regarded the disappearing vehicle. "She is a well-intentioned party. She thinks she can talk people over. She thinks that when people are in a temper they will listen to common-sense. And she hasn't even now learned a lesson. She thinks she would have succeeded with more time; but of course she has to get back to Inverstry. And she still believes she would have had her own way if she had had a day or two to spare."

"What is the matter?"

"Oh, nothing much," said the other, carelessly. "Only his lordship in a fury at the idea of my marrying the daughter of a Radical. And of course it isn't the slightest use pointing out that Mr. Winterbourne's Radicalism generally consists in opposing what is really a Radical government; and it isn't the slightest use pointing out that politics don't run in the blood, and that Yolande has no more wish to destroy the British Constitution than I have. However, what is the consequence? They can fight it out amongst themselves."

But Melville did not seem inclined to treat the matter in this offhand way. His thoughtful face was more grave than was its wont. After a second or two he said,—

"Look here, Archie, I have got something to say to you. Will you walk along the strath a bit?"

"You are going to try the loch?" said the Master,

observing that his companion had his fishing-rod under his arm.

“Yes, for an hour or so, if they are rising.”

“I will come and manage the boat for you, then,” said the other, good-naturedly.

“Then we can go on together to Allt-nam-Ba. You are dining there, I suppose.”

“Well, no,” said young Leslie, with a trifle of embarrassment.

“But I was told I should meet you.”

“I was asked. Well, you see, the lodge is small, and it isn't fair to overcrowd it, and give Yolande so much more housekeeping trouble. Then Macpherson may come down from Inverness any afternoon almost to arrange about the Glendyerg march. We have come to a compromise about that—anything is better than a lawsnit—and the gully just above the watcher's bothy remains ours, which is the chief thing.”

But Melville was not to be put off. He knew this young man.

“What is the real reason of your not going up to Allt-nam-Ba this evening?”

“Well, I will tell you, if you want to know. The real reason is that my people have treated the Winterbournes badly, and I am ashamed of it, and I don't want to go near the place more than I can help. If they imagine we are all very busy at Lynn, that may be some excuse for neither my father nor my aunt having had the common civility to call at the lodge. But I am afraid Mr. Winterbourne suspects the true state of affairs, and of course that puts me into rather a difficult position when I am at Allt-nam-Ba; and when you see a difficult position before you, the best thing you can do is not to step into it.”

“And do you expect everything to be made smooth and comfortable for you?” said Melville, almost angrily. “Don't you expect to have any trouble at all in the world? When you meet the difficulties of life, is your only notion to turn away and run from them?”

“Yes, as fast as I can and as far as I can. Look here, Jack, different people have different views: it doesn't follow that you are right because you look at things not as I do. You think common-sense contemptible; I think Quixotism contemptible; it cuts both ways, you see. I say distinctly that a man who accepts trouble when he can avoid

it is an ass. I know there are lots of women who like woe, who relish it and revel in it. There are lots of women who enjoy nothing so much as a funeral—the blinds all down, a mysterious gloom in the rooms, and weeping relations fortifying themselves all day long against their grief by drinking glasses of muddy port wine and eating buns. Well, I don't. I don't like woe. I believe in what a young Scotch fellow said to me one morning on board ship when we were on the way out—I think he was a bagman from Glasgow—at all events he came up to me with an air of profound conviction on his face, and said, 'Man, it's a seeckening thing to be seeck!' Well, that is the honest way of looking at it. And although I am arguing not so much with you as with Polly, still I may as well say to you what I said to her when she wanted me to do this, that, and the other thing: 'No; if those people don't see it would be to their interest and to everybody's interest that this marriage should take place, they are welcome to their opinion. I sha'n't interfere. I don't mean to have any domestic squabble if I can help it. I prefer a quiet life.'"

By this time they had reached the boat, which they dragged down to the water and shoved off, the Master of Lynn good-naturedly taking the oars. It was a pleasant, warm afternoon, and it looked a likely afternoon for fishing besides; but it was in a very silent and absent fashion that Jack Melville put his rod together and began to look over his casts. This speech of the young Master's was no revelation to him; he had known all that before. But, coming in just at this moment, it seemed to make the task he had undertaken more and more difficult and dangerous; and indeed there flashed across his mind once or twice some wild doubt as to the wisdom of his decision, although that decision had not been arrived at without long and anxious consideration.

And it was in a very perfunctory way that he began to throw out the flies upon the water, insomuch that one or two rises he got he missed through carelessness in striking. In any case the trout were not rising freely, and so at length he said,—

"Archie, would you mind rowing over to the other side? One of the shepherds sent me word that the char have come there, and Miss Winterbourne has never seen one. I only want one or two to show her what they are like; I don't suppose they will be worth cooking just now."

"But you have no bait."

"I can manage with the fly, I think."

And so they rowed away across the pretty loch on this placid afternoon; the while Melville took off the cast he had been using, substituting three sea-trout flies of the most brilliant hues. Then, when they had got to the other side, Melville made for a part of the shore where the banks seemed to go very sheer down; and then proceeded to throw the flies over a particular part of the water, allowing them slowly to sink. It was an odd sort of fly-fishing, if it could be described as fly-fishing at all. For after the cast had been allowed to sink some couple of yards or so, the flies were slowly and cautiously trailed along; then there was a curious sensation as if an eel were swallowing something at the end of the line—very different from the quick snap of a trout—and then, as he carefully wound in the reel there appeared in the water a golden-yellow thing, not fighting for its life as a trout would, but slowly, oilily circling this way and that until a scoop of the small landing-net brought the lethargic, feebly flopping, but beautifully golden-and-red-spotted fish into the boat. When he had got the two that he wanted he had done with that: it was not sport. And then he sat down in the stern of the boat, and his rod was idle.

"Archie," said he, "there is something better in you than you profess."

"Oh, come," said the other, "char-fishing isn't exciting, but it is better than a lecture."

"This is serious," said the other, quietly; "you yourself will admit that when I tell you."

And then, very cautiously at first, and rather in a round-about way, he told him the whole sad story, begging him not to interrupt until he had finished, and trying to invoke the young man's pity and sympathy for what those people had suffered, and trying to put their action in a natural light, and trying to make clear their motives. Who was to blame—the indiscreet sister who had invented the story, or the foolishly affectionate father who could not confess the truth—he would not say; he would rather turn to consider what they had attempted and succeeded in securing—what the beautiful child-nature of this girl should grow up untainted with sorrow and humiliation and pain.

The Master of Lynn heard him patiently to the end,

without any expression of surprise or any other emotion. Then he said,—

“I suppose, Jack, you have been asked to tell me all this; most likely you are expected to take an answer. Well my answer is clear. Nothing in the world would induce me to have anything to do with such a system, or conspiracy, or whatever it may be called. You may think the incurring of all this suffering is fine; I think it is folly. but that is not the point. I am not going to judge them. I have to decide for myself, and I tell you frankly I am not such a fool as to bring any skeleton into my cupboard. I don't want my steps dogged; I don't want to have to look at the morning paper with fear. If I had married and found this out afterward, I should have said I had been grossly deceived; and now, with my eyes open, I consider I should be behaving very badly toward my family if I let them in for the possibility of any scandal or disgrace.”

“Why, man, how could there be any such thing?” Melville exclaimed; but he was interrupted.

“I let you have your say; let me have mine. There is no use beating about the bush. I can have nothing to do with any such thing; I am not going to run the risk of any public scandal while it can be avoided.”

“What would you do, then, if you were in Winterbourne's position?”

“What would I do? What I would not do would be to incur a life-long martyrdom, all for a piece of sentimental folly.”

“But what would you do? I want to know what you would do.”

“I would lock the woman up in a lunatic asylum. Certainly I would. Why should such a system of terrorism be permitted? It is perfectly absurd.”

“You cannot lock her up in a lunatic asylum unless she is a lunatic, and the poor creature does not seem to be that—not yet, at least.”

“I would lock her up in a police cell, then.”

“And would that prevent exposure?”

“At all events, it would prevent her going down and lying in wait for him in Westminster Palace Yard. But that is not the point. It is not what I would do in his place, it is what I am going to do in my own. And that is clear enough. I have had enough bother about this business; I am not going to have any more. I am not going to have

any secrets and mysteries. I am not going to submit to any terrorism. Before I marry Yolande Winterbourne all that affair of that lunatic creature must be arranged, and arranged so that every one may know of it without fear and trembling and dissimulation."

"The message is definite," said Melville, absently, as his companion took up the oars and began to row across to the other side of the loch.

It was characteristic of this man that he should now begin and try to look at this declaration from young Leslie's point of view, and endeavor to convince himself of its reasonableness; for he had a general wish to approve of people and their ways and opinions, having in the long-run found that that was the most comfortable way of getting along in the world. And this that the Master had just said was, regarded from his own position, distinctly reasonable. There could be no doubt that Mr. Winterbourne had had his life perverted and tortured mainly through his trying to hide this secret from his daughter; and it was but natural that a young man should be unwilling to have his own life clouded over in like manner. Even John Shortlands had not sought to defend his friend when he told the story to Melville. As for himself—that is, Melville—well, he could not honestly approve of what Mr. Winterbourne had done—*except when he heard Yolande laugh.*

They rowed over to the other side in silence, and there got out.

"I hope I did not use any harsh terms, Jack," the young man said. "But the thing must be made clear."

"I have been wondering," said the other, "whether it would not have been better if I had held my tongue. I don't see how either you or your wife could ever have heard of it."

"I think it would have been most dishonorable of you to have known that and to have kept it back from me."

"Oh, you do?"

"Most distinctly I do."

"There is some consolation in that. I thought I was perhaps acting the part of an idle busybody, who generally only succeeds in making mischief. And I have been wondering what is the state of the law. I really don't know. I don't know whether a magistrate would consider the consumption of those infernal drugs to be drunkenness; and I

don't even know whether you can compulsorily keep in confinement one who is a confirmed drunkard."

"You may very well imagine that I don't want to have anything to do with police courts and police magistrates, or with lunatic asylums either when I get married," said young Leslie, when they had pulled the boat up on the bank. "But this I am sure of, that you can always get sufficient protection from the law from annoyances of that sort, if you choose to appeal to it. On the other hand, if you don't, if you try to shelter people from having their deserts, if you go in for private and perfectly hopeless remedies, then you have to stand the consequences. I declare to you that nothing would induce me to endure for even a week the anxiety that seems to have haunted Winterbourne for years and years."

"But then he is so desperately fond of Yolande, you see," Jack Melville said, with a glance.

Leslie flushed slightly.

"I think you are going too far."

"Oh, I hope not. I only stated a fact. Come, now, Archie," he said, in his usual friendly way, "call your common-sense to you, that you are so proud of. You know I feel myself rather responsible. I don't want to think I have made any mischief—"

"You have made no mischief. I say you would have acted most dishonorably if you had kept this back."

"Well, now, take a rational view of the situation. No doubt you are vexed and annoyed by the opposition at home. That is natural. No one likes his relatives to object when he knows that he has the right and the power to choose for himself. But don't transfer your annoyance over that matter to this, which is quite different. Consider yourself married, and living at Allt-nam-Ba or at Lynn; how can the existence of this poor creature effect you in any way? And, moreover, the poor woman can not live long—"

"She might live long enough to break some more windows, and get everybody's name into the paper," said he. "You don't suppose we should always be living in the Highlands?"

"I want you to come along with me now to the lodge; and you can say that, after all, you found you could come to dinner—there never were people so charmingly free from ceremony of any kind; and after dinner you will tell Mr. Winterbourne that certainly you yourself might not have

been prepared to do what he has done during these years for Yolande's sake, and perhaps that you could not approve of it; but that for the short time likely to elapse you would be content also to keep silence; and you might even undertake to live in the Highlands until death should remove that poor creature and all possible source of annoyance. That would be a friendly, natural, humane sort of thing to do, and he would be grateful to you. You owe him a little. He is giving you his only daughter; and you need not be afraid—he will make it easy for you to buy back Corrievreak and do all the other things you were speaking of. I think you might do that."

"Midsummer madness!" the other exclaimed, with some show of temper. "I can't imagine how you could expect such a thing. Our family is old enough to be haunted by a ghost, and we haven't started one yet; but when we do start one, it won't be a police-court sort of ghost, I can assure you. It is hard luck when one of one's own relatives goes to the bad—I've seen that often enough in families; but voluntarily to take over some one's relative who has gone to the bad, without even the common protection of the policeman and the magistrate—no, thanks!"

"Then that is your message, I suppose."

"Most distinctly. I am not going into any conspiracy of secrecy and terrorism—certainly not. I told you that I liked a quiet life. I am not going to bother about other people's family affairs—assuredly I am not going to submit to any persecution or any possibility of persecution, however remote, about them."

"Very well."

"Don't put it harshly. I wish to be reasonable. I say they have been unreasonable and foolish, and I don't want to involve myself in the consequences. When I marry, I surely must have, as every human being in the country has, the right to appeal to the law. I cannot have my mouth gagged by their absurd secrets."

"Very well."

"And I fancy," the Master of Lynn added, as his eye caught a figure that had just come in sight, far away up the strath, "that that is Yolande Winterbourne herself. You need not say that I had seen her before I left." And so he turned and walked away in the direction of Lynn Towers.

And was this indeed Yolande? Well, he would meet

her with an unclouded face, for she was quick to observe, and all his talk would be about the golden char, and the beautiful afternoon, and the rubber of whist they sometimes had now after dinner. And yet he was thinking.

"I wonder if my way would do," he was saying to himself as he still regarded that advancing figure. "Perhaps it is Quixotic, as Archie would say. Statistics are against me, and statistics are horribly sure things, but sometimes they don't apply to individual cases. Perhaps I have no business to interfere. No matter; this evening at least she shall go home to dinner with a light heart. She does not know that I am going to give her my *Linnæa borealis*."

The tall figure now advancing to him was undoubtedly that of Yolande, and he guessed that she was smiling. She had brought out for a run the dogs that had been left in the kennel; they were chasing all about the hillside and the road in front of her. The light of the sunset was on her face.

"Good-evening, Miss Winterbourne," said he, when they met.

"But I am going to ask you to call me Yolande," said she, quite frankly and simply, as she turned to walk back with him to Allt-nam-Ba; "for I have not many friends, and I like them all to call me Yolande."

CHAPTER XXVI.

A WALK HOME.

"BUT was not that Mr. Leslie?" she said.

"Oh yes, it was," he answered, with an assumed air of indifference. "Yes. It is a pity he cannot dine with you this evening."

"But why did he not come along now, for a minute even, when he was so far?"

She certainly was surprised, and there was nothing for him but to adopt the somewhat lame excuses that the Master in the first instance had offered him.

"I think he is expecting a lawyer from Inverness," said he, rather quickly slurring over the various statements,

“and if he came by the afternoon boat he would be due just about now. They have a good deal of business on hand just now at Lynn.”

“Yes, apparently that is true,” she said, with rather a singular gesture—very slight, but significant. “We have not seen anything of them.”

“Well, you see,” he continued, in the most careless and cheerful way, “no doubt they know your father is occupied with the shooting, and you with your amateur housekeeping—which I am told is perfect. Mr. Shortlands says the lodge is beautifully managed.”

“Ah, does he?” said she, with a quick flush of genuine pleasure. “I am glad to hear that. Ah, it is very simple now—oh yes, for they are all so diligent and punctual. And now I have more and more time for my botany, and I am beginning to understand a little more of the arrangement, and it is interesting.”

“I consider you have done very well,” said he—“so well that you deserve a reward.”

“Ah, a prize?” said she, with a laugh. “Do you give prizes at your school? Well now—let me see—what shall I choose? A box of chocolates.”

“Did they allow you to choose your own prizes at Chateau Cold Floors? We don’t do that here. No; the reward I have in store for you is the only specimen I have got of the *Linnaea borealis*—the only plant that bears the name of the great master himself, and such a beautiful plant too! I don’t think you are likely to find it about here. I got mine at Clova; but you can get everything at Clova.”

“It is so kind of you!” she said; “but what am I to do with it?”

“Start a herbarium. You ought to have plenty of time; if not, get up an hour earlier. You have a fine chance here of getting the Alpine species. I have got some fresh boards and drying-paper down from Inverness; and I meant to lend you my hand-press; but then I thought I might want it myself for some other purpose; and as Mrs. Bell was glad to have the chance of presenting you with one, I said she might; it will down from Inverness to-morrow.”

“But I cannot accept so much kindness—” she was about to protest, when he interrupted her.

“You must,” he said simply. “When people are inclined to be civil and kind to you, you have no right to snub them.”

Suddenly she stopped short and faced him. There was a kind of mischief in her eyes.

"Will you have the same answer," she asked, slowly, and with her eyes fixed on him, "when Mrs. Bell presents to you Monaglen?"

Despite himself a flush came over the pale, handsome features.

"That is absurd," said he quickly. "That is impossible. I know the Master jokes about it. If Mrs. Bell has any wild dreams of the kind—"

"If she has," Yolande said, gravely, "if she wishes to be civil and kind, you have no right to snub her."

"You have caught me, I confess it," he said, with a good-natured laugh, as they resumed their walk along the wide strath. "But let us get back to the sphere of practical politics."

He then proceeded to give her instructions about the formation of a herbarium; and in this desultory conversation she managed very plainly to intimate to him that she would not have permitted him to take so much trouble had this new pursuit of hers been a mere holiday amusement. No; she hoped to make something more serious of it; and would it not be an admirable occupation for her when she finally came to live in these wilds, where occupations were not abundant? And he (with his mind distraught by all sorts of anxieties) had to listen to her placidly talking about her future life there, as if that were to be all very plain sailing indeed. She knew of no trouble; and she was not the one to anticipate trouble. Her chief regret at present was that her botanizing (at least so far as the collection of plants was concerned) would cease in the winter!

"But you cannot live up here in the winter!" he exclaimed.

"Why not?"

"You would be snowed up."

"Could anything be more delightful than that?" she said. "Oh, I see it all before me—like a Christmas picture. Big red fires in the rooms; outside, the sunlight on the snow, the air cold and clear, and papa going away over the hard, sparkling hills to shoot the ptarmigan and the white hares. Don't you know, then, that papa will take Allt-nam-Ba for all the year round when I come to live here? And if Duncan, the keeper, can live very well in the bothy,

why not we in the lodge! Oh, I assure you it will be ravishing."

"No, no, no; you could not attempt such a thing," he said. "Why the strath might be quite impassable with the snow. You might be cut off from the rest of the world for a fortnight or three weeks. You would starve."

"Perhaps, then, you never heard of tinned meats?" she said, with an air of superiority.

"No, no; the people about here don't do like that. Of course in the winter you would naturally go in to Inverness, or go south to Edinburgh, or perhaps have a house in London."

"Oh no, that is what my papa would never, never permit—anything but London."

"Well, then, Inverness is a pleasant and cheerful town. And I must say this for the Master, that he is not at all likely to prove an absentee landlord, when his turn comes. He is quite as diligent as his father in looking after the estate; there won't be any reversal of policy when he succeeds, as sometimes happens."

"Inverness?" said she, wistfully. "Yes; perhaps Inverness—perhaps here—that is what my papa would prefer; but London—ah, no! And sometimes I think he is so sadly mistaken about me—it is his great affection, I know—but he thinks if I were in London I would hear too much of the attacks they make on him, and I might read the stupidities they put into the newspapers about him. He is so afraid of my being annoyed—oh, I know, for himself he does not care—it is all me, me—and the trouble he will take to watch against small annoyances that might happen to me, it is terrible and pitiable, only it is so kind. Why should I not go to the House of Commons? Do they think I care about their stupidities? I know they are angry because they have one man among them who will not be the slave of any party—who will not be a—a cipher, is it?—in a crowd—an atom in a majority—no, but who wishes to speak what he thinks is true."

"Oh, but, Yolande," said he (venturing thus to address her for the first time), "I want you to tell me; do you ever feel annoyed and vexed when you see any attack on your father?"

She hesitated; she did not like to confess.

"It is a natural thing to be annoyed when you see stupidities of malice and spitefulness," she said, at length—

with the fair freckled face a shade warmer in color than usual.

“For I can give you a panacea for all such wounds, or rather an absolute shield against them.”

“Can you—can you?” she said, eagerly.

“Oh, yes,” he said, in that carelessly indifferent way of his. “When you see anybody pitching into your father, in the House or in a newspaper, all you have to do is to recall a certain sonnet of Milton’s. You should bear it about with you in your mind; there is a fine wholesome tone of contempt in it; and neither persons in public life nor their relatives should have too great a respect for other people’s opinions. It is not wholesome. It begets sensitiveness. You should always consider that your opponents are—are—”

“*Ames de boue!*” said Yolande, fiercely. “That is what I think when I see what they say of my papa.”

“But I don’t think you would feel so much indignation as that if you would carry about this sonnet with you in your memory:—

“I did but prompt the age to quit their clogs
By the known rules of ancient liberty,
When straight a barbarous noise environs me
Of owls, and cuckoos, asses, apes, and dogs;
As when those hinds that were transformed to frogs
Railed at Latona’s twin-born progeny,
Which after held the Sun and Moon in fee.
But this is got by casting pearls to hogs,
That bawl for freedom in their senseless mood,
And still revolt when Truth would set them free.
License they mean when they cry Liberty;
For who loves that must first be wise and good;
But from that mark how far they rove we see,
For all this waste of wealth and loss of blood.”

There is a good, honest, satisfactory, wholesome contempt in it.”

“Yes, yes; will you write it down for me?” said she, quickly and gratefully. “Will you write it down for me when we get to the lodge?”

“If you like.”

When they drew near to the lodge, however, they found that something very unusual was going forward. The whole of the women-servants, to begin with, were outside, and gazing intently in the direction of a hillside just above the confluence of the Dun Water and the Crooked Water,

while the pretty Highland cook was asserting something or other in strenuous terms. The moment they saw Yolande those young people fled into the house, like so many scurrying rabbits; but Sandy, the groom, being over near the kennel, did not hear, and remained perched up on the fence, using an opera-glass which he had filched from the dining room mantelpiece. Yolande went over to him (as she had to kennel up the dogs in any case), and said to him,—

“What is the matter, Sandy?”

He very nearly dropped with fright, but instantly recovered himself, and said, with great excitement:—

“I think they are bringing home a stag, madam; I am sure that is it. I was seeing the powny taken down to cross the burn; and it was not the panniers that was on him; and there is the chentlemen standing by the bridge, looking.”

There certainly was a small group of figures standing on the further side of that distant bridge—a slim little structure slung on wires, and so given to oscillation that only one person could cross at a time. This performance, indeed, was now carefully going on; but what had become of the pony? Presently they saw something appear on the top of the bank on this side of the stream.

“It is a stag undoubtedly, Yolande,” Jack Melville said, (he had got hold of the opera-glass) “and I should say a good one. Now how could that have come about? Never mind, I dare say your father will be delighted enough, and I should say Duncan will tune up his pipes this evening.”

Yolande looked through the glass, and was very much excited to see that small pony coming home with its heavy burden; but the gentlemen were now invisible, having passed behind a hillock. And so she sped into the house, fearful that the curiosity of the women-servants might have let affairs get behindhand, and determined that everything should be in readiness for the home-coming sportsmen.

Melville was left outside; and as he regarded now the gillie leading the pony, and now the party of people who were visible coming over the hillock, it was not altogether of the dead stag that he was thinking. In this matter of the Master of Lynn he had only performed his thankless duty as messenger, as it were; still, it was not pleasant to have to bring back bad news. Sometimes he wished he had had nothing whatever to do with the whole complication; then;

again, he reminded himself that that secret had been confided to him by John Shortlands unsolicited; and that he, Melville, had subsequently done what he honestly thought best. And then he turned to think about Yolande. Would he grudge anything he could do for that beautiful child-nature—to keep it clear and bright and peaceful? No, he could not. And then he thought, with something of a sigh, that those who were the lucky ones in this world did not seem to place much value on the prizes that lay within their hands' reach.

The corpulent John Shortlands, as he now came proudly along, puffed and blowing and breathless, clearly showed by his radiant face who had shot the stag; and at once he plunged into an account of the affair for the benefit of Jack Melville. He roundly averred that no such "fluke" was known in English history. They were not out after any stag. No stag had any right to be there. They had passed up that way in the morning with the dogs. Nor could this have been the wounded stag that the shepherds had seen drinking out of the Allt-corrie-an-eich some four days ago. No; this must have been some wandering stag that had got startled out of some adjacent forest, and had taken refuge in the glen just as the shooting party were coming back from the far tops. Duncan had proposed to have a try for a few black-game when they came down to these woods; and so, by great good luck, John Shortlands had put a No. 4 cartridge in his left barrel, just in case an old blackcock should get up wild. Then he was standing at his post, when suddenly he heard a pattering; a brown animal appeared with head high and horns thrown back; the next instant it passed him, not more than fifteen yards off, and he blazed at it—in his nervousness with the right barrel; then he saw it stumble, only for a second; then on it went again, he after it, down to the burn, which fortunately was rushing, fed with the last night's rain; in the bed of the stream it stumbled again and fell, and as it struggled out and up the opposite bank, there being now nothing but the breadth of the burn between him and it, he took more deliberate aim, fired, and the stag fell back stone-dead, its head and horns, indeed, remaining partly in the water.

Then Mr. Winterbourne, when he came along, seemed quite as honestly pleased at this unexpected achievement as if the stag had fallen to his own gun; while as for Duncan, the grim satisfaction on his face was sufficient testimony.

"This is something like a good day's work," said he. "And I was bringing down the stag for Miss Winterbourne to see it before the dark, and now Peter will take back the powny for the panniers."

But Jack Melville took occasion to say to him aside,—

"Duncan, Miss Winterbourne will look at the head and horns when you have had time to take a sponge or a wet cloth to them, don't you understand?—later on in the evening, perhaps."

"Very well, sir. And I suppose the gentleman will be sending in the head to Mr. Macleay's to-morrow? It is not a royal, but it is a very good head whatever."

"How many points—ten?"

"Yes, sir. It is a very good head whatever."

Yolande had so effectively hurried up everything inside the lodge that when the gentlemen appeared for dinner it was they who were late, and not the dinner. And of course she was greatly delighted also, and all the story of the capture of the stag had to be told over again, to the minutest points. And again there was a fierce discussion as to who should have the head and horns, John Shortlands being finally compelled to receive the trophy which naturally belonged to him. Then a wild skirl outside in the dark.

"What is that, now?" said John Shortlands.

"That," said Yolande, complacently—for she had got to know something of these matters—"is the pibroch of Donald Dhu."

"That is the pibroch of Donald Black, I suppose," said John Shortlands, peevishly. "What the mischief have I to do with Donald Black? I want the Pibroch of John Shortlands. What is the use of killing a stag if you have to have somebody else's pibroch played? If ever I rent a deer forest in the Highlands, I will have my own pibroch made for me, if I pay twenty pounds for it."

Indeed, as it turned out, there was so much joy diffused throughout this household by the slaying of the stag that Jack Melville, communing with himself, decided that his ill news might keep. He would take some other opportunity of telling Shortlands the result of his mission. Why destroy his very obvious satisfaction? It was a new experience for him; he had never shot a stag before. The cup of his happiness was full to the brim, and nobody grudged it him, for he was a sound-hearted sort of man.

One rather awkward incident arose, however, out of this

stag episode. In the midst of their dinner talk Yolande suddenly said,—

“Papa, ought I to send a haunch of venison to Lynn Towers? It seems so strange to have neighbors, and not any compliment one way or the other. Should I send a haunch of venison to Lord Lynn?”

Her father seemed somewhat disturbed.

“No, no, Yolande; it would seem absurd to send a haunch of venison to a man who has a deer forest of his own.”

“But it is let.”

“Yes, I know; but no doubt the tenant will send in a haunch to the Towers if there is any occasion.”

“But I know he does not, for Archie said so. Mr. Melville,” she said, shifting the ground of her appeal, “would it not be a nice compliment to pay to a neighbor. Is it not customary?”

His eyes had been fixed on the table; he did not raise them.

“I—I don’t think I would,” said he, with some little embarrassment. “You don’t know what fancies old people might take. And you will want the venison for yourselves. Besides, Mr. Shortlands shot the stag; you should let him have a haunch to send to his friends in the south.”

“Oh, yes, yes, yes, certainly,” she cried, clapping her hands. “Why did I not think of it? That will be much better.”

At another time John Shortlands might have protested, but something in Melville’s manner struck him, and he did not contend that the haunch of venison should be sent to Lynn Towers.

After dinner they went out into the dark, and, guided by the sound of the pipes, made their way to the spacious coach-house, which they found had been cleared out, and in which they found two of the gillies and two of the shepherds—great, huge, red-bearded, brawny men—dancing a four-some reel, while Duncan was playing as if he meant to send the roof off. The head and horns of the deer were hung up on one of the pillars of the loose box. The place was ruddily lit up by two lamps, as well as a few candles; there was a small keg of whiskey in a dim corner. And Yolande thought that the Highland girls might just as well come over from the lodge (the English Jane was of no use), and very soon the dancing party was made much more

picturesque. But where was the Master of Lynn, with the torchlight dance he had promised them on the occasion of their killing their first stag?

When Jack Melville was going away that night he was surprised to find the dog-cart outside, Sandy in his livery, the lamps lit, and warm rugs on the front seat.

"This is not for me?" he said.

"It is, indeed," said Yolande.

"Oh, but I must ask you to send it back. It is nothing for me to walk to Gress. You have enough work for your horses just now."

"The night is dark," she said, "and I wish you to drive; you will have the light of the lamps."

"Why should I drive—to Gress!" he said.

"But I wish it," she answered.

And that was enough.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DANGER.

IT might have appeared to any careful observer, who also knew all the circumstances of the case, that what was now happening, or about to happen, away up in those remote solitudes, was obvious enough; but certainly no suspicion of any such possibilities had so far entered the minds of the parties chiefly interested. Yolande regarded her future as already quite settled. That was over and done with. Her French training had taught her to acquiesce in any arrangement that seemed most suitable to those who hitherto had guided her destiny, and as she had never experienced any affection stronger than her love for her father, so she did not perceive the absence of any such passion. To English eyes her marriage might seem a *mariage de complaisance*, as Colonel Graham had styled it; in her eyes it seemed everything that was natural and proper and fitting, and she was quite content. It never occurred to her to analyze the singular satisfaction she always felt in the society of this new friend—the sense of safety, trust, guidance, and reliance with which he inspired her. He

claimed a sort of schoolmasterish authority over her, and she yielded; sometimes, it is true, re-asserting her independence by the use of feminine wiles and coquetries which were as natural as the scamperings of a young rabbit or the rustling of the leaves of a tree, but more ordinarily submitting to his dictation and government with a placid and amused sense of security; while as for him, had he dreamed that he was stealing away the affections of his friend's chosen bride he would have fled from the spot on the instant, with shame and ignominy haunting him. But how could such an idea present itself to him? He looked on her as one already set apart. She belonged to the Master of Lynn. As his friend's future wife he hoped she also would be his friend. He admired her bright spirits, her cheerfulness, and frankness; but it was this very frankness (added to his own blunt disregard of conventionalities) that was deceiving them both. Five minutes after she had asked him to call her Yolande she was talking to him of her future home and her married life, and she was as ready to take his advice in that direction as in the direction of drying plants and setting up a herbarium. And if sometimes she reversed their relations, and took to lecturing him on his unwise ways at Gress—his carelessness about his meals, and so forth—why, then he humored her, and considered her remonstrances as only an exhibition of friendly interest, perhaps with a trifle of gratitude added, for he knew very well that he had spent a good deal of time in trying to be of service to her.

Then, at this particular moment, everything seemed to conspire toward that end which neither of them foresaw. Yolande found the domestic arrangements at Allt-nam-Ba flow very easily and smoothly, so that practically she had the bulk of the day at her own disposal, and Gress was a convenient halting-place when she went for a drive, even when she had no particular message or object in view. But very frequently she had a distinct object in view, which led to her sending on the dog-cart to Foyers and awaiting its return. On the very morning, for example, after Jack Melville had dined with them, she got the following letter, which had been brought out from Whitebridge late the night before. The letter was from Mrs. Bell, and the handwriting was singularly clear and precise for a woman now over sixty, who had for the most part educated herself.

“ GRESS, *Wednesday*.

“ MY DEAR YOUNG LADY,—Excuse my forwardness in sending you a letter ; but I thought you would like to hear the good news. The lawyers write to me from Edinburgh that young Mr. Fraser is now come of age, and that the trustees are now willing to sell the Monaglen estate, if they can get enough for it. This is what I have looked forward to for many’s the day ; but we must not be too eager like : the lawyers are such keen bodies, and I have not saved up my scraps to feed their pigs. I think I would like to go to Edinburgh myself, if it was not that they lasses would let everything go to rack and ruin, and would have no sense to study Mr. Melville’s ways ; the like of them for glaiquet hussies is not in the land. But I would greatly wish to see you, dear young lady, if you will honor me so far, before I go to Edinburgh, for I can not speak to Mr. Melville about it, and I do not wish to go among they lawyers with only my own head to guide me. I am, your humble servant,
“ CHRISTINA BELL.”

Yolande laughed when she got this letter, partly with pure joy over the great good fortune which was likely to befall her friend, and partly at the humor of the notion that she should be consulted about the conveyancing of an estate. However, she lost no time in making her preparations for driving down to Gress, and indeed the dog-cart, had already been ordered to take some game into Foyers, and also the stag’s head destined for Mr. Macleay. Yolande saw that everything was right, got a brace of grouse and a hare for Mrs. Bell, and then set out to drive away down the strath, on this changing, gloomy, and windy day that had streaked the troubled surface of the loch with long white lines of foam.

She found Mrs. Bell much excited, but still scarcely daring to talk above a whisper, while from time to time she glanced at the laboratory, as if she feared Mr. Melville would come out to surprise them in the discussion of this dark secret.

“ He is not in the schoolhouse, then ? ” Yolande said.

“ Not the now. Ye see, the young lad, Dalrymple, that he got from Glasgow College is doing very well now, and Mr. Melville is getting to be more and more his own maister. He canna aye be looking after they bairns ; and if we could get Monaglen for him, who could expect him to bother his head

about a school? He's done enough for the folk about here; he'll have to do something for himself now—ah, Miss Winterbourne, that will be a prood day for me, when I hand him over the papers."

She spoke as if it were a conspiracy between these two.

"But it will be a sair, sair job to get him to take the place," she continued, reflectively, "for the man has little common-sense; but he has pride enough to move mountains."

"Not common-sense?" said Yolande, with her eyes showing her wonder. "What has he then? I think it is always common-sense with him. When you are talking with him, and not very sure what to do, whatever he says is always clear, straight, and right; you have no difficulty; he sees just the right way before you. But how am I to help you Mrs. Bell?"

"Well, I dinna ken, exactly, but the idea of an auld woman like me going away to Edinburgh among a' they lawyers is just dredfu'. It's like Daniel being put into the den of lions."

"Well, you know, Mrs. Bell," Yolande said, cheerfully, "no harm was done to him. The lions did not touch a hair of his head."

"Ay I ken that," said Mrs. Bell grimly; "but they dinna work miracles nowadays."

"Surely you must have your own lawyers?" the girl asked.

"I have that."

"You can trust them, then; with them you are safe enough, surely?"

"Well, this is the way on't," said Mrs. Bell, with decision. "It is not in the nature o' things for a human being to trust a lawyer—it's no possible. But the needcessity o' the case drives ye into their hands, and ye can only trust in Providence that they will make the other side suffer, and no you. They're bound to make their money out o' somebody. I'm no saying, ye ken, but that the lawyers that have been doing business for ye for a nummer o' years might no be a bit fairer; for it's their interest to carry ye on, and be freens wi' ye, but, dear me, when I think of going away to Edinburgh a' by mysel', among that pack o' wolves, it's enough to keep one frae sleeping at nights."

"But every one says you are so shrewd, Mrs. Bell!"

"Do they?" she responded, with a pleased laugh. "Just

because I kenned what they men were after? It needed no much judgment to make that out. Maybe if I had been a young lass they might ha' persuaded me; but when I was a young lass with scarcely a bawbee in my stocking, there was never a word on't; and when they did begin to come about when I was an auld woman, I kenned fine it was my bank-book they were after. It didna take much judgment to make that out—the idiwuts! Ay, and my lord, too—set him up wi' his eight months in London by himsel,' and me finding the money to put saut in his kail. Well, here am I bletherin' about a lot o' havers like that, as if I was a young lass out at the herdin,' when I wanted to tell ye, my dear young leddy, just how everything was. Ye see what I was left was, first of a,' the whole of the place in Leicestershire, and a beautifu' country side it is; and a braw big house too, though it was not likely I was going to live there, in a state not becoming to one like me, and me wanting to be among my own people besides. Then there was some money in consols, which is as safe as the Bank, as the saying is; and some shares in a mine in Cornwall. The shares I was advised to sell, and I did that; for I am not one that cares for risk; but when I began to get possession of my yearly money, and when I found what I could save was mounting up, and mounting up, in jist an extraordinary way, I put some o' that into French stock, as I thought I might take a bit liberty wi' what was my own making in a measure. And now, though it's no for me to boast, it's a braw sum—a braw sum; and atweel I'm thinking that a fine rich English estate, even by itsel' should be able to buy up a wheen bare hillsides in Inverness-shire, even if we have to take the sheep ower at a valuation—ay, and leave a pretty penny besides. I declare when I think o' what might ha' happened, I feel I should go down on my knees and thank the Almighty for putting enough sense in my head to see what they men were after? or by this time there might not be stick or stone to show for it—a' squandered away in horse-racing or the like—and Mr. Melville, the son of my auld master, the best master that ever lived, going about from one great man's house to another, teaching the young gentlemen, and him as fit as any o' them to have house and ha' of his ain—”

She stopped suddenly, for both of them now saw through the parlor window Jack Melville himself come out of his laboratory, carelessly whistling. Doubtless he did not know

that Yolande was in the house, else he would have walked thither; and probably he had only come out to get a breath of fresh air, for he went to a rocking-chair close by the garden, and threw himself into it, lying back with his hands behind his head. Indeed, he looked the very incarnation of indolence, this big-boned, massive-shouldered young man, who lay there idly scanning the skies.

"I am going out to scold him for laziness," said Yolande.

"Please no, my dear young leddy," Mrs. Bell said, laying her hand gently on the girl's arm. "It is now he is working."

"Working! Does it look like it? Besides, I am not so afraid of him as you are, Mrs. Ball. Oh yes, let me go."

So she went out and through the little lobby into the garden, coming upon him indeed, quite unawares.

"Mrs. Bell says I must not speak to you," she said. "She says you are working, and must not be disturbed. Is it so? And what is the work? Is it travelling at 68,000 miles an hour?"

"Something like that," said he; and he forgot to rise, while she remained standing. Then he glanced round the threatening sky again. "You were brave to venture out on a morning like this."

"Why? What is there?"

"Looks like the beginning of a storm," said he. "Here we are fairly sheltered, but there are some squalls of wind going across, I hope you won't all be blown down the strath into the loch to-night."

"Ah, but I do not believe any longer in weather prophecies," she said, tauntingly. "No, I do not think any one has any knowledge of it—at Allt-nam-Ba, at all events. It is never five minutes the same. One moment you are in the clouds, the next in sunlight. Duncan looks up the hill in the morning, and is very serious; before they have got to the little bridge there is blue sky. It is all chance. Do you think science can tell you anything? You, now, when you bought that instrument"—and here she regarded a solar machine, the mirrors and brass mountings of which were shining clear even on this dull day—"did you expect to get enough sunlight at Gress for you to distil water?"

A twinkle in the clear gray eyes showed that she had caught him.

"There are mysteries in science that can not be explained to babies," said he (and she thought it rather cool

that he remained sitting, or rather lounging, instead of going and fetching a chair for her). "Everything isn't as easy as snipping out the name of a genus and pasting it at the foot of a double sheet of white paper."

"That is good of you to remind me," she said, without in the least being crushed. "One thing I came for to-day was the *Linnæa borealis*."

Then he instantly jumped to his feet.

"Certainly," said he; "come along into the house. You may as well take back the boards, and drying-paper, and so forth, with you; and I will show you how to use them now. There may be a few other things you should have out of my herbarium, just to start you, as it were—not rare plants, but plants you are not likely to get, up at Allt-nam-Ba. Are you superstitious? I will give you a four-leaved clover, if you like."

"Did you find it?"

"Yes; in a marshy place in Glencoe."

"But it is the finder to whom it brings luck, as I have read," Yolande said.

"Oh, is it so?" he answered, carelessly. "I am not learned in such things. If you like, you can have it; and in the meantime we will start you with your *Linnæa* and a few other things. I don't suppose the hand-press has arrived yet; but mind, you must not refuse it."

"Oh no," said she, gravely repeating the lesson of yesterday. "When one wishes to be civil and kind to you, you have no right to snub him."

The repetiton of the phrase seemed to remind him; he suddenly stopped short, regarding her with an odd, half-amused look in his eyes.

"Can you keep a secret?"

"I hope so."

"Well, now," he said, rather under his voice, "I am going to tell you a secret, which on no account must you tell to Mrs. Bell. I have just heard on very good authority that Monaglen is about to come into the market, after all."

"Oh, indeed!" said, she, with perfectly innocent eyes. "Can it be possible?"

"Don't mention the thing to Mrs. Bell, for you know her wild schemes and visions, and it would only make her unhappy."

"Why, then?"

"Because what she means to do (if she really means to do

it) is not practicable," he said, plainly. "Of course, if she buys Monaglen for herself, good and well. She is welcome to sit in the hall of my fathers. I daresay she will do more good in the neighborhood than they ever thought of doing, for she is an excellent kind of creature. And it is just possible that, seeing me about the place, she may have thought of some romantic project; but when once I am clear away from Gress, it will quite naturally and easily fade from her mind."

"But you are not going away!" she said; and that sudden sinking of the heart ought to have warned her; but indeed she had not had a wide experience in such matters.

"Oh yes," said he, good-naturedly. "How could this makeshift last? Of course I must be off—but not this minute, or to-morrow. I have started a lot of things in this neighborhood—with Mrs. Bell's money, mind—and I want to see them going smoothly; then I'm off."

She did not speak. Her eyes were distant; she was scarcely conscious that her heart was so disappointed and heavy. But she was vaguely aware that the life she had been looking forward to in these far solitudes did not seem half so full and rich now. There was some loneliness about it—a vacancy that the mind discerned, but did not know how to fill up. Was it the gloom of the day? She thought of Allt-nam-Ba in the winter; it had no longer any charm for her. There was no mischief in her brain now, no pretended innocence in her eyes. Something had befallen—she scarcely knew what. And when she followed him into the house, to get the *Linnæa borealis*, that little pathetic droop of the mouth was marked.

That same afternoon as she was driving home, and just above the little hill that goes down to the bridge adjacent to Lynn Towers, she met the Master, who was coming along on horseback. The drive had been a sombre one somehow, for the skies were gloomy and threatening. But when she saw him, she brightened up, and gave him a very pleasant greeting.

"You are quite a stranger," said she, as they both stopped.

"We have had a good many things to attend to at the Towers," he said—as she thought, rather distantly.

"I hear them talking of having a hare drive some day soon—away at a great distance, at the highest parts. You will come and help them, I suppose?"

"I think I must go in to Inverness, and I may have to be there for some days."

"You will come and see us before you go, then?" she inquired, but rather puzzled by the strangeness, almost stiffness, of his manner.

"I hope so," said he. "I am glad to see you looking so well. I hear they have been having good sport at Allt-nam-Ba. Well, I must not detain you. Good-by."

"Good-by," and she drove on, wondering. He had not even asked how her father was. But perhaps these business affairs were weighing on his mind.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE GALE.

As night fell, the storm that Jack Melville had foreseen began to moan along the upper reaches of the hills; and from time to time smart torrents of rain came rattling down, until the roar of the confluent streams out there in the dark sounded ominously enough. All through the night, too, the fury of the gale steadily increased; the gusts of wind sweeping down the gorge shook the small building (although solidly built of stone) to its very foundations; and even the fierce howling of the hurricane was as nothing to the thunder of the now swollen waters, that seemed to threaten to carry away the whole place before them. Sleep was scarcely possible to the inmates of this remote little lodge; they knew not what might not happen up in this weather-brewing cauldron of a place; and at last, after an anxious night, and toward the blurred gray of the morning, they must have thought their worst fears were about to be realized, for suddenly there was a terrific crash, as if part of the building had given way. Almost instantly every bedroom door was opened: clearly no one had been asleep. And then, through a white cloud of dust, they began to make out what had happened; and although that was merely the falling in of part of the ceiling of the hall, of course they did not know how much more was likely to come down, and Mr. Winterbourne called to Yolande, sternly

forbidding her to stir. John Shortlands was the first to venture out, and through the cloud of plaster dust he began to make his examinations, furnished with a long broom-handle that he obtained from one of the frightened maids.

"It is all right," he said. "There are one or two other pieces that must come down; then the rest will be safe. Yolande, you can go back to bed. What? Well, then, go back and shut your door, anyway, until I get Duncan and the gillies to shovel this stuff away. Don't come out until I tell you."

John Shortlands then went downstairs, got a cap, and opened the hall door. The spectacle outside was certainly enough to deter any but the bravest. There was no rain, but the raging hurricane seemed to fill the atmosphere with a gray mist, while from time to time a gust would sweep down into the bed of the stream, tear the water there into a white smoke, and then whirl that up the opposite hillside until it was dissolved in the general vapor. But these water-spouts, he quickly perceived, were only formed down there in the opener stretches of the strath, where the gusts could get freely at the bed of the stream; up here at Allt-nam-Ba there was nothing but the violence of the wind that came in successive shocks against the lodge, shaking it as if it were in the grip of a vise.

He ventured out. His first experience was to find his deer-stalking cap, which he greatly prized, whirled from off his head, and sent flying away in the direction of the Allt-cam-Ban. But he was not to be daunted. He went indoors again and got another; and then, going out and putting his bullet head and his splendid bulk against the wind, he fairly butted his way across to the bothy.

He found Duncan trying to put up some boards where a window had been blown in; and an angry man was he when he learned from Mr. Shortlands what had happened at the lodge.

"The Master will give it him!" he said, savagely.

"Whom?"

"The plasterer from Inverness, sir. I was telling him it was no use mending and mending, but that it was a whole new ceiling that was wanted, after such a wild winter as the last winter. The Master will be very angry. The young lady might have been hurt."

"The young lady might have been hurt!" said John Shortlands, ironically. "Yes, I should think so, if she

happened to have been passing. But in this part of the country, Duncan, is it only women who are hurt when the ceiling of a house falls on them? The men don't mind?"

Duncan was quite impervious to irony, however. He went away to get Sandy and the rest of them to help him in shovelling off the plaster—going out, indeed, into this raging tempest in his shirt sleeves and with a bare head, just as if nothing at all unusual were happening.

Of course with the inhabitants of the lodge there was no thought of stirring out that day. They built up the fires in the little dining and drawing rooms, and took to books, or the arrangement of flies, or the watching at the window how the gale was still playing its cantrips—tearing at the scant vegetation of the place, and occasionally scooping up one of those vaporous water-spouts from the bed of the stream. Then Yolande managed to do a little bit of household adornment—with some audible grumbling.

"Dear me," she said, standing at the dining-room fire, "did ever any one see two such untidy persons? There is a fine row of ornaments for a mantelshelf! I wonder what madame would say. Let us see: First, some cartridges; why are they not in the bag? Second, a dog-whistle. Third, some casting-lines. Fourth, a fly-book; well, I will make a little order by putting the casting-lines in the book—"

"Let them alone, Yolande," her father said, sharply. "You will only make confusion."

She put them in, nevertheless, and continued her enumeration:

"Fifth, some rifle cartridges: and if one were to fall in the fire, what then? Sixth, the stoppers of a fishing-rod. Now, the carelessness of it! Why does not Duncan take your rod to pieces, Mr. Shortlands, and put in the stoppers? I know where he keeps it—outside the bothy, just over the windows: and think, now, how it must have been shaken last night. Think of the varnish!"

"I believe you're right, Yolande," said he; "but it saves a heap of trouble."

"Seventh, a little silver fish in a box—a deceitful little beast all covered with hooks. Eighth, a flask, with whiskey or some horrid-smelling stuff in it: ah, madame, what would you think? Then a telescope: well, that is something better; that is something better. *Allons*, we will go and look at the storm."

Looking out of the window was clearly impracticable,

for the panes were blurred ; but she went to the hall door, opened it, and directed the glass down the valley. She was quite alone ; the others were busy with their books. Then suddenly she called to them,—

“ Come ! come ! There is some one that I can see—oh ! imagine any one fighting against such a storm ! A stranger ? Perhaps a friend from England ? Ah, such a day to arrive ! Or perhaps a shepherd ?—no, there are no dogs with him—”

Well, the appearance of a human being on any day, let alone such a day as this, in this upland strath, was an event, and instantly they were all at the door. They could not make him out, much less could they guess on what errand any one, stranger or friend, should be willing to venture himself against such a gale. But that figure away down there kept making headway against the wind. They could see how his form was bent, his head projecting forward. He was not a shepherd : as Yolande had observed, he had no dogs with him. He was not the Master of Lynu ; that figure belonged to a bigger man than the Master.

“ I'll tell you who it is,” said John Shortlands, curtly. “ It's Jack Melville. Three to one on it.”

“ Oh, the folly ! ” Yolande exclaimed, in quite real distress. “ He will be blown over a rock.”

“ Not a bit of it,” said John Shortlands, to comfort her. “ The people about here don't think anything of a squall like this. Look at Duncan there, marching down to dig some potatoes for the cook. A head keeper in the South wouldn't be as good-natured as that, I warrant you. They are much too swell gentlemen there.”

And it was Jack Melville, after all. He was very much blown when he arrived, but he soon recovered breath, and proceeded to say that he had been afraid that the gale might catch the boat and do some mischief.

“ And it has,” said he. “ It is blown right over to the other side, and apparently jammed between some rocks. So I have come along to get Donald and one of the gillies to go with me, and we will have it hauled clear up on the land.”

“ Indeed, no ! ” Yolande protested, with pleading in her face. “ Oh no !—on such a day why should you go out ? Come in and stay with us. What is a boat, then—”

“ But,” said he, with a sort of laugh, “ I am afraid I am

partly responsible for it. I was the last that used the boat."

"Never mind it," said she: "what is it—a boat! No, you must not go through the storm again."

"Oh, but we are familiar with these things up here," said he, good-naturedly. "If you really mean to invite me in, I will come—after Donald and I have gone down to the loch."

"Will you?" she said, with her bright face full of welcome and gladness.

"I must come back with my report, you know," said he. "For I am afraid she may have got knocked about; and if there is any damage, I must make it good."

"Nonsense!" Mr. Winterbourne interrupted.

"Oh, but I must. It is Lord Lynn's boat; and there are people from whom one is not quick to accept an obligation. But then there are other people," said he, turning to Yolande, "from whom you can receive any number of favors with great pleasure; and if you don't mind my staying to lunch with you—if I may invite myself to stay so long—"

"Do you think I would have allowed you to go away before?" she said, with a touch of pride in her tone: she had got to know something of Highland ways and customs.

So he and Donald and two others went away down the glen, and in about a couple of hours came back with the report that the boat was now placed in a secure position, but that it had had two planks stove in, and would have to be sent to Inverness for repair, Jack Melville insisting on taking that responsibility on his own shoulders, although, as a matter of fact, the Master of Lynn had assisted him in dragging the boat up on the last occasion on which it had been used. As for Yolande, she did not care for any trumpery boat; was it not enough that their friend should have come to keep them company on this wild and solitary day? Then there was another thing. She had determined to astonish the gentlemen with the novelty of a hot luncheon, and here was another who would see what the little household could do! Indeed, it was a banquet. Her father drew pointed attention to the various things (although he was himself far enough from being a gourmand). A venison pasty John Shortlands declared to have been the finest dish he had encountered for many a day. He wished to heavens they could make a salad like that at the Abercorn Club.

"Is it not nice to see them so grateful?" said she, turning with one of her brightest smiles to the stranger guest. "The poor things! No wonder they are pleased. The other day I climbed away up the hill to surprise them at their lunch—oh, you can not imagine the miserableness of it! Duncan told me where I should find them. The day was so dull and cold, the clouds low down, and before I was near the top, a rainy drizzle began—"

"They generally say a drizzling rain in English," her father said.

"But we are not in England. It is a rainy drizzle in the Highlands, is it not, Mr. Melville?"

"It does not matter how you take it," he answered; "but we get plenty of it."

"Then the cold wet all around, and the heather wet; and I went on and on—not a voice—not a sign of any one. Then a dog came running to me—that was Bella—and I said to myself, 'Aha, I have found you now!' Then we went on; and at last—the spectacle!—the poor people all crouched down in a peat-hag, hiding from the rain; papa seated on a game-bag that he had put on a stone; Mr. Shortlands on another; their coat collars up, the plates on their knees, the knives, forks, cold beef, and bread all wet with the rain—oh, such a picture of miserableness has never been seen! Do you wonder that they are grateful, then—do you wonder that they approve—when they have a fire, and a warm room, and dry plates, and dry knives and forks?"

Indeed they had a very pleasant meal, and the coffee and cigars after it lasted a long time; for of what good was anything but laziness so long as the wind howled and roared without? All the time, however, Jack Melville was wondering how he could have a few minutes' private talk with Mr. Shortlands; and as that seemed to be becoming less and less probable—for Mr. Winterbourne seemed content to have an idle day there in his easy-chair by the fire, and Yolande was seated on the hearthrug at his knees, quite content to be idle too—he had to adopt a somewhat wild pretext. John Shortlands was describing the newest variety of hammerless gun; then he spoke of the one he himself had bought just before coming north. Melville pretended a great interest. Was it in the bothy? Yes. Might they not run over for a couple of minutes? Yolande protested;

but John Shortlands assented ; so these two ventured out together to fight their way across.

Instead of going into the central apartment of the bothy, however, where the guns stood on a rack, Melville turned into the next apartment, which was untenanted, and which happened to be warm enough, for Duncan had just been preparing porridge for the dogs, and a blazing fire still burned under the boiler.

“ I wanted to say a word to you,”

“ I guessed as much. What’s your news ? ”

“ Well, not very good,” said Jack Melville, rather gloomily, “ and I don’t like to be the bearer of bad news. I meant to tell you the other evening, and I could not do it somehow.”

“ Oh, out with it, man ! never fear. I like to hear the worst, and then hit it on the head with a hammer if I can. There would have been none of this trouble if I had had my way from the beginning—however that’s neither here nor there.”

“ I am afraid I am the bearer of an ultimatum,” Melville said.

“ Well ? ”

It was clear that Melville did not like this office at all. He kept walking up and down the earthen floor, though the space was limited enough, his brows contracted, his eyes bent on the ground.

“ It is awkward for me,” he said, rather impatiently. “ I wish I had had nothing to do with it. But you cannot call me an intermeddler, for you yourself put this thing on me ; and—and— Well, it is not my business either to justify or condemn my friend : I can only tell you that I considered it was safest and wisest he should know the true state of affairs. If I have erred in that, well—”

“ I don’t think you have,” said Shortlands, slowly. “ I left it open to your decision—to your knowledge of this young fellow. But I think my decision would, in any case, have been the same.”

“ Very well. I think I put the whole matter fairly to him. I told him that he had practically no risk to run of any annoyance, and that the cause of all this trouble, poor wretch, would soon be out of the way ; and then I told him what Mr. Winterbourne had gone through for the sake of his daughter. Well, he did not seem to see it that way.

He was quite frank. He said it was a mistaken Quixotism that had been at the bottom of it all."

"I said so too; but still——"

"It is a matter of opinion; it is of no immediate consequence," Melville said. "But what he seemed quite resolved on was that he would not consent to become a party to this secrecy. He says everything must be met and faced. There must be no concealment. In short, Yolande must be told the whole story, so that in case of any further annoyance there should be no dread of her discovering it, but only the simple remedy of appealing to a constable."

John Shortlands considered for a minute or two.

"I don't know that he isn't quite right," he said, slowly. "Yes I imagine his position is a fair one. At one time I said the same. I can look at it from his point of view. I think we must admit, as men of the world, that he is perfectly in the right. But"—and here he spoke a little more quickly—"I can't help speaking what is on my mind; and I say that if you think of what Winterbourne has done for this girl, this ultimatum, if you call it so, from the fellow who pretends to be her sweetheart, from the fellow who wants her for a wife—well, I call it a—shabby thing!"

Melville's face flushed. "I am not his judge," he said coldly.

"I beg your pardon," John Shortlands said; for his anger was of short duration. "I ought to have remembered that this young Leslie is your friend, as Winterbourne is mine. I beg your pardon; I can do no more."

"Yes, you can," said Melville in the same measured way. "I wish you distinctly to understand that I express no opinion whatever on Mr. Leslie's decision; and I must ask you to remember that I certainly can not be supposed to approve of it simply because I am a messenger."

"Quite so—quite so; I quite understand," John Shortlands said. "The least said the easiest mended. Let's see what is to be done. I suppose there was no doubt in his mind—no hesitation?"

"None."

"It would be no good trying to talk him over?"

"I, for one, will not attempt it. No, his message was distinct. I think you may take it as final. Perhaps I ought to add that he may have been influenced by the fact that his people at the Towers seem to have been quarrelling with him about this marriage, and he has not the best of

tempers at times, and I think he feels injured. However, that is not part of my message. My message was distinct, as I say. It was, in fact, an ultimatum."

"Poor Winterbourne!" John Shortlands said, absently. "I wonder what he will look like when I tell him. All his labor and care and anxiety gone for nothing. I suppose I must tell him; there must be an explanation; I dare say that young fellow won't come near the lodge now until there is an understanding. Winterbourne will scarcely believe me. Poor devil—all his care and anxiety gone for nothing! I don't mind about her so much. She has pluck; she'll face it. But Winterbourne—I wonder what his face will look like to-night when I tell him."

"Well, I have done my best and my worst, I suppose however it turns out," said Jack Melville, after a second or two. "And now I will bid you good-by."

'But you are going into the house?'

"No,"

"No?" said the other, in astonishment. "You'll bid them good-by, I suppose?"

"I cannot!" said Melville, turning himself away in a manner. "Why, to look at that girl—and to think of the man she is going to marry having no more regard for her than to—" But he suddenly recalled himself: this was certainly not maintaining his attitude of impartiality. "Yes," said he, "I suppose I must go in to bid them good-by."

They were loath to let him depart, Mr. Winterbourne, indeed, wishing him to remain for dinner and stay the night. But they could not prevail on him; and soon he was making his way with his long strides down the glen, the gale now assisting instead of impeding his progress, John Shortlands (who was apt to form sudden and rather violent prepossessions and prejudices) was looking after him, as the tall figure grew more and more distant.

"There goes a man," he was saying to himself; "and I wish to heavens he would kick that hound!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

SURMISES.

THE gale was followed by heavy rain ; there was no going out the next day. But indeed it was not of shooting that those two men were thinking.

“ He might have spared her ! he might have spared her ! ” was Mr. Winterbourne’s piteous cry, as he sat in his friend’s room and gazed out through the streaming window-panes on the dismal landscape beyond.

And who was to tell her ? Who was to bring grief and humiliation on that fair young life ? Who was to rob her of that beautiful dream and vision that her mother had always been to her ? Not he, for one. He could not do it.

And then (for he was a nervous, apprehensive man, always ready to conjure up distressing possibilities) might she not misunderstand all this that had been done to keep her in ignorance ? Might she not be angry at having all her life been surrounded by an atmosphere of concealment ? If she were to mistake the reason of her father’s having stooped to subterfuge and deceit ? Was Yolande going to despise him, then—she, the only being in the world whose opinion he cared for ? And always his speculations and fears and anxious conjectures came back to this one point,—

“ He might have spared her ! he might have spared her ! ”

“ Now look here, Winterbourne,” John Shortlands said, in his plain-spoken way. “ If I were you before I would say a word of this story to Yolande I would make sure that that would be sufficient for him. I don’t know. I am not sure. He says that Yolande must be told ; but will that suffice ? Is that all he wants ? If I were in your place I would have a clear understanding. Do you know, I can’t help thinking there is something behind all this that hasn’t come out. If this young fellow is really in earnest about Yolande—if he is really fond of her—I don’t think he would put this stumbling-block in the way, I don’t think he would exact this sacrifice from you, unless there were some other reason. Yesterday afternoon Melville said as

little as he could. He didn't like the job. But he hinted something about a disagreement between young Leslie and his family over this marriage."

"I guessed as much," said Mr. Winterbourne. "Yes, I have suspected it for some time. Otherwise I suppose his father and aunt would have called on Yolande. They know each other. Yolande stayed a night at the Towers when Mrs. Graham first brought her here—until the lodge was got ready."

"Of course if the fellow has any pluck, he won't let that stand in his way. In the meantime, a domestic row isn't pleasant, and I dare say he is impatient and angry. Why should he revenge himself on Yolande, one might ask? But that is not the fair way of putting it. I can see one explanation. I didn't see it yesterday; and the fact is, I got pretty wild when I learned how matters stood, and my own impression was that kicking was a sight too good for him. I have been thinking over it since, though: the rain last night kept me awake. And now I can understand his saying, 'Well, I mean to marry in spite of them; but I will take care, before I marry, to guard against any risk of their being able to taunt me afterward.' And then, no doubt, he may have had some sort of notion that, when there was no more concealment, when every one knew how matters stood, some steps might be taken to prevent the recurrence of—of—you know. Well, there is something in that. I don't see that the young fellow is so unreasonable."

Mr. Winterbourne was scarcely listening, his eyes looked haggard and wretched.

"When I took this shooting," he said, absently, "when the place was described to me, on the voyage out, I thought to myself that surely there Yolande and I would be safe from all anxiety and trouble. And then again, up the Nile, day after day I used to think of her being married and settled in this remote place, and used to say to myself that then at last everything would be right. And here we are face to face with more trouble than ever."

"Nonsense, man! nonsense!" John Shortlands said, cheerfully. "You exaggerate things. I thought this mountain work would have given you a better nerve. Everything will be right—in time. Do you expect the young people never to have any trouble at all? I tell you everything will be right—in time. You pull up your courage; there is nothing so dreadful about it; and the end is certain

—wedding bells, old slippers, speeches, and a thundering headache the next morning after confectioner's champagne."

The haggard eyes did not respond.

"And who is to tell her? The shock will be terrible—it may kill her."

"Nonsense! nonsense! Whoever is to tell her, it must not be you. You would make such a fuss; you would make it far more desperate than it is. Why, you might frighten her into declaring that she would not marry—that she would not ask her husband to run the risk of some public scandal. That would be a pretty state of affairs—and not unlikely on the part of a proud, spirited girl like that. No, no; whoever tells her must put the matter in its proper light. It is nothing so very desperate. It will turn out all right. And you for one should be very glad that the Master, as you call him, now knows the whole story; for after the marriage, whatever happens, he cannot come back on you and say you had deceived him.

"After the marriage! And what sort of a happy life is Yolande likely to lead when his relatives object to her already?"

"There you are off again! More difficulties! Why, man, these things must be taken as they come. You don't know that they object, and I don't believe they can object to her, though the old gentleman mayn't quite like the color of your politics. But supposing they do, what's the odds? They can't interfere. You will settle enough on Yolande to let the young couple live comfortably enough until the old gentleman and his sister arrive at common sense—or the churchyard. I don't see any difficulty about it. If only those people were to marry whose friends and relatives on both sides approved, you might just as well cut the Marriage Service out of the Prayer-book at once."

This was all that was said at the time, and it must be admitted that it left Mr. Winterbourne pretty much in the same mood of anxious perturbation. His careworn face instantly attracted Yolande's notice, and she asked him what was the matter. He answered that there was nothing the matter, except the dulness of the day perhaps, and for the moment she was satisfied. But she was not long satisfied. She became aware that there was trouble somewhere; there was a kind of constraint in the social atmosphere of the house; she even found the honest and hearty John Shortlands given to moody staring into the fire. So she

went to her own room, and sat down and wrote the following note:—

“ ALLT-NAM-BA. *Friday.*

“ MY DEAR ARCHIE,—We are all in a state of dreadful depression here, on account of the bad weather, and the gentlemen shut up with nothing to do. Please, please take pity on us, and come along to dinner at seven. Last night, in spite of the gale, Duncan played the ‘Hills of Lynn’ outside after dinner, and it seemed a kind of message that you ought to have been here. I believe the gentlemen have fixed next Tuesday, if the weather is fine, for the driving of the hares on the far-off heights: and I know they expect you to go with them; and we have engaged a whole crowd of shepherds and others to help in the beating. There is to be a luncheon where the *Uska-nan-Shean*, as Duncan calls it, but I am afraid the spelling is not right, comes into the Allt Crôm, and it will not be difficult for me to reach there, so that I can see how you have been getting on. Do you know that Monaglen is for sale?—what a joy it will be if Mr. Melville should get it back again after all! that will indeed be ‘Melville’s Welcome Home!’ You will make us all very happy if you will come along at seven, and spend the evening with us. Yours affectionately.

“ YOLANDE.”

She sent this out to be taken to Lynn Towers by one of the gillies, who was to wait for an answer; and in something more than an hour the lad on the sturdy little black pony brought back this note:

“ LYNN TOWERS, *Friday, afternoon.*

“ DEAR YOLANDE,—I regret very much that I cannot dine with you to-night; and as for Tuesday, I am afraid that will be also impossible, as I go to Inverness to-morrow. I hope they will have a good day. Yours sincerely,

“ A. LESLIE.”

She regarded this answer at first with astonishment; then she felt inclined to laugh.

“Look at this, then, for a love-letter!” she said to herself.

But by and by she began to attach more importance to it. The coldness of it seemed studied; yet she had done nothing that she knew of to offend him. What was amiss? Could he be dissatisfied with her conduct in any direction?

She had tried to be most kind to him, as was her duty, and until quite recently they had been on most friendly terms. What had she done? Then she began to form the suspicion that her father and John Shortlands were concealing something—she knew not what—from her. Had it anything to do with the Master? Had it anything to do with the singular circumstance that not even the most formal visiting relationship had been established between Lynn Towers and the lodge? Why did her father seem disturbed when she proposed to send a haunch of venison to the Towers—the most common act of civility?

It was strange that, with these disquieting surmises going on in her brain, she should think of seeking information and counsel, not from her father nor from Mr. Shortlands, nor from the Master of Lynn, but from Jack Melville. It was quite spontaneously and naturally that she thought she would like to put all her difficulties before him; but on reflection she justified herself to herself. He was most likely to know, being on friendly terms with everybody. If there was nothing to disquiet her—nothing to reproach herself with—he was just the person to laugh the whole thing away, and send her home satisfied. She could trust him. He did not treat her quite so much as a child as the others did. Even when he spoke bluntly to her, in his schoolmasterish way, she had a vague and humorous suspicion that he was quite aware that their companionship was much more on a common footing than all that came to; and that she submitted because she thought it pleased him. Then she had got to believe that he would do much for her. If she asked him to tell her honestly what he knew, he would. The others might try to hide things from her; they might wish to be considerate toward her; they might be afraid of wounding her sensitiveness; whereas she knew that if she went to John Melville he would speak straight to her, for she had arrived at the still further conclusion that he knew he could trust her, as she trusted him. Altogether, it was a dangerous situation.

Next morning had an evil and threatening look about it; but fortunately there was a brisk breeze, and towards noon that had so effectually swept the clouds over that the long wide valley was filled with bright warm sunshine. Yolande resolved to drive in to Gress. There was no game to take to Foyers; but there were two consignments of household materials from Inverness to be fetched from Whitebridge.

Besides, she wanted to know what Mrs. Bell had done about Monaglen and the lawyers. And besides, she wanted to know where *Alchemilla arvensis* ended and *A. alpina* began; for she had got one or two varieties that seemed to come in between, and she had all a beginner's faith in the strict lines of species. There was, in short, an abundance of reasons.

On arriving at Gress, however, she found that Mr. Melville, having finished his forenoon work in the school, had gone off to his electric storehouse away up in the hills; and so she sent on the dog-cart to Whitebridge, and was content to wait awhile with Mrs. Bell.

"I'll just send him a message, and he'll come down presently."

"Oh no, please don't; it is a long way to send any one," Yolande protested.

"It's no a long way to send a wee bit flash o' fire, or whatever it is that sets a bell ringing up there," said the old dame. "It's wonderful, his devices! Sometimes I think it's mair than naitural. Over there, in the laboratory, he has got a kind of ear-trumpet; and if you take out the stopper, and listen in quateness, you'll hear every word that's going on in the school."

"That is what they call a telephone, I suppose?"

"The very thing!" said Mrs. Bell, as she left the room to send a message to him.

When she came back she was jubilant.

"My dear young leddy, I am that glad to see ye! I've sent the letter."

"What letter?"

"To the lawyers. Oh, I was a lang, lang time thinking o't, for they lawyers are kittle cattle to deal wi'; and I kenned fine if I was too eager they would jalouse what I was after, and then they would be up to their pranks. So I just telled them that I did not want Monaglen for mysel'—which is as true's the Gospel—but that if they happened to hear what was the lowest price that would be taken, they might send me word, in case I should come across a customer for them. It doesna do to be too eager about a bargain, especially wi' they lawyers; it's just inviting them to commit a highway robbery on ye."

"If Mr. Melville," said Yolande, quickly, "were to have Monaglen, he would still remain in this neighborhood, then?"

“Nae doot about that! It’ll be a’ a man’s wark to put the place to rights again; for the factor is a puir body, and the young gentleman never came here—he has plenty elsewhere, I have been told.”

“Mr. Melville would still be living here?” said Yolande, eagerly.

“At Monaglen, ay, and it’s no so far away. But it will mak’ a difference to me,” the old dame said, with a sigh. “For I have got used to his ways about the hoose, and it will seem empty like.”

“Then you will not go to Monaglen?”

“Deed, no; that would never do. I wouldna like to go as a servant, for I have been living too long in idleness; and I couldna go back in any other kind of a way, for I ken my place. Na, na; I will just bide where I am, and I will keep £220 a year or thereabouts for mysel’; and wi’ that I can mak’ ends meet brawly, in spite o’ they spendrif hus-sies.”

These romantic projects seemed to have a great fascination for this good dame (who had seen far less that was attractive in the prospect of being given away in marriage by a famous duke), and she and Yolande kept on talking about them with much interest, until a step outside on the gravel caused the color to rush to the girl’s face. She did not know that when she rose on his entrance. She did not know that she looked embarrassed, because she did not feel embarrassed. Always she had a sense of safety in his presence. She had not to watch her words, or think of what he was thinking of what she was saying. And on this occasion she did not even make the pretence of having come about *Alchemilla alpina*. She apologized for having brought him down from his electric works, asked him if he would take a turn in the garden for a minute or two, as she had something to say to him, and then went out, he following. She did not notice that when she made this last remark his face looked rather grave.

“Mr. Leslie went to Inverness this morning?” she said, when they were out in the garden.

“Yes; he looked in as he was passing.”

“Do you know why he went?”

“Well,” said he; “I believe they have been having some dispute about the marches of the forest; but I am told it is to be all amicably settled. I fancy Archie is going to have the matter squared up in Inverness.”

She hesitated then. She took up a flower, regarded it for a second, and then looked him fair in the face.

"Mr. Melville," said she, "do you think it strange that I ask you this question?—you are Mr. Leslie's friend: is he offended with me?"

His eyes were looking at hers too—rather watchfully. He was on his guard.

"I have not the slightest reason to suppose that he is," was the answer, given with some earnestness, for he was glad to find the question so simple.

"None? I have not done anything that he could complain of—to you or to any one?"

"I assure you I never heard him breathe a word of the kind. Besides," added he, with a very unusual warmth in his pale cheeks, "I wouldn't listen. No man could be such a coward—"

"Oh, please don't think that I am angry," she said, with earnest entreaty. "Please don't think I have to complain. Oh no! But every one knows what mischief is wrought sometimes by mistake; some one being offended and not giving a chance of explanation; and—I was only anxious to be assured that I had done nothing to vex him. His going away without seeing us seemed so strange—yes; and also his not coming of late to the lodge; and—and my papa seems to be troubled about something; so that I became anxious; and I knew you would tell me the truth, if no one else would. And it is all right then? There is no reason to be disturbed, to be anxious?"

He was disturbed, at all events, and sorely perplexed. He dared not meet her eyes; they seemed to read him through and through when he ventured to look up.

"Don't imagine for a moment that you have anything to reproach yourself with—not for a moment," he said.

"Has any one, then?"

"Why, no. But—but—well, I will be honest with you, Yolande: there has been a little trouble—at the Towers. The old people are not easy to please; and—and Archie has too much spirit to allow you to be dragged into a controversy, you see; and as they don't get on very well together, I suppose he is glad to get off a few days to Inverness."

"Ah, I understand," she said, slowly. "That is something to know. But why did he not tell me? Does he think I am afraid of a little trouble like that? Does he think I should be frightened? Oh no. When I make a

promise, it is not to break it. He should have trusted me more than that. Ah, I am sorry he has to go away on my account. Why did he not speak? It is strange."

And then she regarded him with those clear, beautiful, contemplative eyes of hers.

"Have you told me everything?"

He did not answer.

"No. There is more. There is more to account for my papa's trouble—for his going away this morning. And why do I come to you?—because I know that what you know you will tell to me. You have been my friend since ever we came to this place."

He could not withstand her appeal; and yet he dared not reveal a secret which was not his own.

"Yolande," said he, and he took her hand to emphasize his words, "there is more; but it is not I who must tell you. What I can tell you, and what I hope you will believe, is that you are in no way the cause of anything that may have happened. You have nothing to reproach yourself with. And any little trouble there may be will be removed in time, no doubt. When you have done your best, what more can you do? 'The rest is with the gods.'"

It is just possible that she might have begged him to make a candid confession of all that he knew—for she had a vague fear that she herself was the cause of that anxiety which she saw too visibly in her father's looks—but at this moment the dog-cart drove up to the front gate, and she had to go. She bade him, and also Mrs. Bell, good-by almost in silence; she went away thoughtfully. And as he watched her disappear along the high-road—the warm westerling light touching the red gold of her hair—he was thoughtful too; and his heart yearned toward her with a great pity; and there was not much that this man would not have done to save her from the shadow that was about to fall on her young life.

CHAPTER XXX.

"DARE ALL."

He could not rest, somehow. He went into the laboratory and looked vacantly around; the objects there seemed to have no interest for him. Then he went back to the house—into the room where he had found her standing; and that had more of a charm for him: the atmosphere still seemed to bear the perfume of her presence, the music of her voice still seemed to hang in the air. She had left on the table—she had forgotten, indeed—a couple of boards enclosing two specimens of the *Alchemilla*. These he turned over, regarding with some attention the pretty, quaint French handwriting at the foot of the page: "*Alchemilla alpina. Alpine Lady's-mantle. Allt-nam-Ba, September, 188—.*" But still his mind was absent; he was following in imagination the girl herself, going away along the road there, alone, to meet the revelation that was to alter her life.

And was he to stand by idle? Was he going to limit himself to the part he had been asked to play—that of mere message-bearer? Could he not do something? Was he to be dominated by the coward fear of being called an intermeddler? He had not pondered over all this matter (with a far deeper interest than he himself imagined) without result. He had his own views, his own remedy; he knew what counsel he would give, if he dared intervene. And why should he not dare? He thought of the expression of her face as she had said, with averted eyes, "Good-by!" and then, why, then, a sudden impulse seized him that somehow and at once he must get to Allt-nam-Ba, and that before she should meet her father.

He snatched up his hat and went quickly out and through the little front garden into the road; there he paused. Of course he could not follow her; she must needs see him coming up the wide strath; and in that case what excuse could he give? But what if the shooting party had not yet come down from the hill? Might he not intercept them somewhere? Sometimes, when they had been

taking the far tops in search of a ptarmigan or two, they came home late—to be scolded by the young house-mistress for keeping dinner back. Well, the result of these rapid calculations was that the next minute he had set out to climb, with a swiftness that was yet far too slow for the eagerness of his wishes, the steep and rough and rugged hills that stretch away up to the neighborhood of Lynn forest.

First it was over peat bog and rock, then through a tangled undergrowth of young birches, then up through some precipitous gullies, until at last he had gained the top, and looked abroad over the forest—that wide, desolate, silent wilderness. Not a creature stirred, not even the chirp of a chaffinch broke the oppressive stillness; it seemed a world of death. But he had no time to take note of such matters; besides, the solitude of a deer forest was familiar to him. He held along by the hilltop, sometimes having to descend into sharp little gullies and clamber up again, until, far below him, he came in sight of Lynn Towers and the bridge, and the stream, and the loch; and onward still he kept his way, until the strath came in view, with Allt-nam-Ba, and a pale blue smoke rising from the chimneys into the still evening air. Probably Yolande had got home by that time; perhaps she might be out and walking round the place, talking to the dogs in the kennel, and so forth. So he kept rather back from the edge of the hilltop, so that he should not be descried, and in due time arrived at a point overlooking the junction of three glens, down one of which the shooting people, if they had not already reached the lodge, were almost certain to come.

He looked and waited however, in vain, and he was coming to the conclusion that they must have already passed and gone on to the lodge, when he fancied he saw something move behind some birch bushes on the hillside beyond the glen. Presently he made out what it was—a pony grazing, and gradually coming more and more into view. Then he reflected that the pony could only be there for one purpose; that probably the attendant gillie and the panniers were hidden from sight behind those birches; and that, if it were so, the shooting party had not returned, and were bound to come back that way. A very few minutes of further waiting proved his conjecture to be right, a scattered group of people, with dogs in to heel, appearing on the crest of the hill opposite. Then he had no

further doubt. Down this slope he went at headlong speed, crossed the rushing burn by springing from boulder to boulder, scrambled up through the thick brushwood and heather of the opposite banks, and very soon encountered the returning party, who were now watching the panniers being put on the pony's back.

Now that he had intercepted Mr Winterbourne, there was no need for hurry. He could take time to recover his breath, and also to bethink himself as to how he should approach this difficult matter; and then, again, he did not wish those people to imagine that he had come on any important errand. And so the conversation, as the pony was being loaded, was all about the day's sport. They had done very well, it appeared; the birds had not yet got wild, and there was no sign of packing; they had got a couple of teal and a golden plover, which was something of a variety; also they had had the satisfaction of seeing a large eagle—which Duncan declared to be a Golden Eagle—at unusually close quarters.

Then they set out for home; Duncan and the gillies making away for a sort of ford by which they could get the pony across the Dun Water, while the three others took a nearer way to the lodge by getting down through a gully to the Corrie-an-eich, where there was a swing-bridge across the burn. When they had got to the bridge, Melville stopped him.

"I am not going on with you to the lodge," said he. "Mr Wintebourne, I have seen your daughter this afternoon. She is troubled and anxious; and I thought I'd come along and have a word with you. I hope you will forgive me for thrusting myself in where I may not be wanted but—but it is not always the right thing to "pass by on the other side." I couldn't in this case."

"I am sure we are most thankful to you for what you have done already," Yolande's father said, promptly; and then he added, with a weary look in his face, "and what is to be done now I don't know. I cannot bring myself to do this that Leslie demands. It is too terrible. I look at the girl—well, it does not bear speaking of."

"Look here, Winterbourne," John Shortlands said, "I am going to leave you two together. I will wait for you on the other side. But I would advise you to listen well to anything that Mr Melville has to say; I have my own guess."

“What I want to know, first of all,” Mr Winterbourne said, with a kind of despair in his voice, “is whether you are certain that the Master will insist? Why should he? How could it matter to him? I thought we had done everything when we let him know. Why should Yolande know? Why make her miserable to no end? Look what has been done to keep this knowledge from her all through these years; and you can see the result in the gayety of her heart. Would she have been like that if she had known—if she had always been thinking of one who ought to be near her, and perhaps blaming herself for holding aloof from her? She would have been quite different; she would have been old in sadness by this time; whereas she has never; known what a care was. Mr. Melville, you are his friend you know him better than any of us. Don’t you think there is some chance of reasoning with him, and inducing him to forego this demand? It seems so hard.”

The suffering that this man was undergoing was terrible. His question formed almost a cry of entreaty, and Jack Melville could scarcely bring himself to answer in what he well knew to be the truth.

“I cannot deceive you,” he said, after a second. “There is no doubt that Leslie’s mind is made up on the point. When I undertook to carry his message, he more than once repeated his clear decision—”

“But why? What end will it serve? How could it matter to them—living away from London? How could they be harmed?”

“Mr. Winterbourne,” said the other, with something of a clear emphasis, “when I reported Leslie’s decision to Mr. Shortlands, as I was asked to do, I refused to defend it—or to attack it, for that matter—and I would rather not do so now. What I might think right in the same case, what you might think right, does not much matter. I told Mr. Shortlands that perhaps we did not know everything that might lead to such a decision; Leslie has not been on good terms with his father and aunt, and he thinks he is being badly used. There may be other things; I do not know.”

“And how do we know that it will suffice?” the other said. “How do we know that it will satisfy him and his people? Are we to inflict all this pain and sorrow on the girl, and then wait to see whether that is enough?”

“It is not what I would do,” said Jack Melville, who had not come here for nothing.

“What would you do, then? Can you suggest any thing?” her father said, eagerly. “Ah, you little know how we should value any one who could remove this thing from us!”

“What I would do? Well, I will tell you. I would go to that girl, and I would see how much of the woman is in her; I think you will find enough; I would say to her, ‘There is your mother; that is the condition she has sunk into through those accursed drugs. Every means has been tried to save her without avail—every means save one. It is for you to go to her—you yourself—alone. Who knows what resurrection of will and purpose may not arise within her when it is her own daughter who stands before her and appeals to her—when it is her own daughter who will be by her side during the long struggle? That is your duty as a daughter: will you do it?’ If I know the girl, you will not have to say more.”

The wretched man opposite seemed almost to recoil from him in his dismay. “Good God!” he muttered, and there was a sort of blank, vague terror in his face, Melville stood silent and calm, awaiting an answer.

“It is the suggestion of a devil,” said this man, who was quite aghast, and seemed scarcely to comprehend the whole thing just yet, “or else of an angel; why—”

“It is the suggestion neither of a devil nor an angel,” said Melville, calmly, “but of a man who has read a few medical books.”

The other, with the half horror-stricken look in his eyes, seemed to be thinking hard of all that might happen; and his two hands clasped together over the muzzle of his gun, which was resting on the ground, were trembling.

“Oh, it is impossible—impossible!” he cried at length “It is inhuman. You have not thought of it sufficiently. My girl to go through *that!*—have you considered what you are proposing to subject her to?”

“I have considered,” Jack Melville said (perhaps with a passing qualm; for there was a pathetic cry in this man’s voice). “And I have thought of it sufficiently, I hope. I would not have dared to make the suggestion without the most anxious consideration.”

“And you would subject Yolande to *that?*”

“No,” said the other, “I would not. I would not subject her to anything; I would put the case before her, and I know what her own answer would be. I don’t think any

one would have to use prayers and entreaties. I don't think it would be necessary to try much persuasion. I say this—put the case before her, and I will stake my head I can tell what her answer will be—what her decision will be—yes, and before you have finished your story!”

“And to go alone—”

“She will not be afraid.”

He seemed to have a very profound conviction of his knowledge of this girl's nature; and there was a kind of pride in the way he spoke.

“But why alone?” pleaded the father—he seemed to be imagining all kinds of things with those haggard eyes.

“I would not have the mental shock lessened by the presence of any one. I would have no possible suspicion of a trap, a bait, a temptation. I would have it between these two: the daughter's appeal to her mother. I am not afraid of the result.”

“She could not. My girl to go away by herself!—she could not; it is too terrible.”

“Try her.”

“She has never travelled alone. Why, even to go to London by herself—”

“Oh, but that has nothing to do with it. That is not what I mean at all. As for that, her maid would go with her as a matter of course; and Mr. Shortlands might see her as far as London if he is going south shortly, as I hear. She could put up at one or other of the hotels that she has already stayed at with you. Then you would give her the address *and leave the rest to her.*”

“You have been thinking over this, Mr. Winterbourne said. “I have not. I am rather bewildered about it.” Shall we ask Shortlands?”

“If you wish. But first let me explain, Mr. Winterbourne. As I understand, several arrangements have been made with this poor woman—only, unhappily, to be broken by her. Well, now, why I want Yolande to go alone—if you think the experiment should be tried at all—is to prevent suspicion in the poor woman's mind. I would have no third person. It should be a matter between the two women themselves: and Yolande must insist on seeing her mother alone.”

“Insist! Yes, and insist with two such wretches as those Romfords! Why, the man might insult her; he might lay hands on her, and force her out of the house.”

Melville's pale, dark face grew dark at this, and his eyes had a sudden, sharp fire in them.

"She must have a policeman waiting outside," he said, curtly. "And her maid must go inside with her, but not necessarily into the room."

"And then," said Mr. Winterbourne, who was apparently picturing all this before his mind; "supposing she were to get her mother away with her, what then?"

"She would take her back to the hotel. She must have a private sitting-room, of course. Then, in two or three days' time, when she had got the necessary travelling things for her mother, she would take her down to some quiet seaside place—Eastbourne, or Bournemouth, or some such place—and get rooms there. The two women would get to know each other that way; Yolande would always be with her; her constant society would be her mother's safeguard."

"You have thought of everything—you have thought of everything," the father murmured. "Well, let us see what Shortlands says. It is a terrible risk. I am not hopeful myself. The thing is, is it fair to bring all this distress and suffering on the girl on such a remote chance?"

"You must judge of that," said Melville. "You asked me what I would do. I have told you."

Mr. Winterbourne was about to step on to the bridge, across which only one could go at a time; but he suddenly turned back, and said, with some earnest emphasis, to the younger man:

"Do not imagine that because I hesitate I think any the less of your thoughtfulness. Not many would have done as much. Whatever happens, I know what your intentions were towards us." He took Melville's hand for a moment, and pressed it. "And I thank you for her sake and for my own. May God bless you!"

When they got to the other side they found John Shortlands seated on a boulder of granite, smoking a cigar. He was not much startled by this proposal, for Melville had mentioned something of the kind to him, in an interjectional sort of fashion, some time before, and he had given it a brief but rather unfavorable consideration. Now, as they talked the matter over, it appeared that he stood about midway between these two, having neither the eager enthusiasm of Jack Melville nor yet the utter hopelessness of his friend Winterbourne.

"If you think it is worth trying, try it," said he, coolly,

"It can't do much harm. If Yolande is to know, she may as well know to some end. Other things have been tried, and failed; this might not. The shock might bring her to her senses. Anyhow, don't you see, if you once tell Yolande all about it, I rather fancy she will be dissatisfied until she has made a trial."

"That is what I am certain of," Melville said, quickly. "I would contentedly leave it to herself. Only the girl must have some guidance."

"Surely, surely," said John Shortlands. "I consider your plan very carefully laid out—if Winterbourne will risk it. The only other way is to leave Yolande in her present happy ignorance, and tell the Master of Lynn, and his father, and his aunt, and whatever other relations he has, to go to the devil."

"Shortlands," said Mr. Winterbourne, angrily, "this is a serious thing; it is not to be settled in your free and easy way. I suppose you wouldn't mind bringing on Yolande the mortification of being jilted? How could you explain to her? She would be left—without a word. And I fear she is beginning to be anxious already. Poor child, whichever way it goes, she will have enough to suffer."

"I should not mind so much which way it goes," said John Shortlands, bluntly, "if only somebody would take the Master of Lynn by the scruff of the neck, and oblige me by kicking him from Allt-nam-Ba bridge to Foyers pier."

"Come, come," said Melville (though he was by much the youngest of these three), "the less said in that way the better. What you want is to make the best of things, not to stir up ill-will. For my part I regard Miss Winterbourne's engagement to Mr. Leslie as a secondary matter—at this present moment I consider her first duty is to her mother; and I am pretty sure you will find that will be her opinion when you put the facts of the case before her. Yes; I am pretty certain of that."

"And who would undertake to tell her?" her father said, "who could face the suffering, the shame, you would see in her eyes? Who would dare to suggest to her that she, so tenderly cared for all her life, should go away and encounter these horrors?"

There was silence.

"If it comes to that," said Melville, slowly, "I will do it. If you think it right—if it will give you pain to speak to her—let me speak to her."

"You?" said her father. "Why should you undertake what cannot but be a dreadful task? Why should you have to bear that?"

"Oh," said he, "my share in the common trouble would be slight. Besides, I have not many friends; and when one has the chance of lending a hand, don't you understand, it is a kind of gratification. I know it will not be pleasant, except for one thing—I am looking forward to her answer; and I know what it will be."

"But, really," her father said, with some hesitation, "is it fair we should put this on you? It is a great sacrifice to ask from one who has been so recently our friend. You have seen her—you have seen how light-hearted she is; and to ask any one to go and take away the happy carelessness of her life from her—"

"Yes, it will make a change," said Melville, thoughtfully. "I know that. She will be no longer a girl. She will be a woman."

"At all events, Winterbourne," John Shortlands broke in, "what I said before, I say now—you are the last man to undertake such a job. You'd frighten the girl out of her senses. It's bad enough as it is; and it'll have to be told her by degrees. I would have a try myself, but I might say something about the cause of her having to be told, and that would only make mischief. If I said anything about your friend Leslie, Mr. Melville, I ask you to forget it. No use making rows." And I say, if Winterbourne decides on taking your way out of this troublous business, and if you don't mind doing what you offered to do, you could not find a better time than next Tuesday, if that will be convenient for you, for we shall be all away at the far tops that day, and I daresay, it will take you sometime to break the news gently."

"I am quite at your service, either on Tuesday or any other day, whenever you let me know what you have decided."

He would not go on to the house with them, despite all their solicitations; on the other hand, he begged them not to say to Yolande that they had seen him. So they went on their way down to the little lodge and its dependencies, while he went back and over the hills.

"He's a—fine fellow that, and no mistake," said the plain spoken John Shortlands. "There is a sort of broad

human nature about him. And I should think, Winterbourne, you were very much obliged to him."

"Obliged?" said Yolande's father. "It is scarcely the word."

CHAPTER XXXI.

CONTRITION.

MRS. GRAHAM, attended by her maid, and dressed in one of the most striking of her costumes, was slowly pacing up and down the loud-echoing railway station at Inverness. This was what her brother used spitefully to call her platform parade; but on this occasion, at all events, she had no concern about what effect, if any, her undoubtedly distinguished appearance might produce. She was obviously deeply preoccupied. Several times she stopped at the book-stall, and absently glanced at the titles of the various journals; and, indeed, when at length she purchased one or two papers, she forgot to take up the change, and had to be called back by the pretty young lady behind the counter. Then she glanced at the clock, handed the newspapers to her maid and bade her wait there for a few minutes, and forwith entered the Station Hotel.

She passed along the corridor, and went into the drawing-room. From that room she had a full view of the general reading-room, which forms the centre of the building, and is lit from the roof; and the first glance showed her the person of whom she was in search. The Master of Lynn, the sole occupant of the place, was lying back in a cane-bottomed rocking-chair, turning over the pages of *Punch*.

"So I have found you at last. What are you doing here?" she said, rather sharply.

He looked up. "I might ask the same question of you," he answered, with much coolness.

"You know well enough. It is not for nothing I have come all the way from Investroy."

"You must have got up early," he remarked.

"I want to know what you are doing here."

"I am reading *Punch*."

"Yes," said she, with some bitterness, "and I suppose your chief occupation is playing billiards all day long with commerical travellers."

"One might be worse employed."

"Archie, let us have none of this nonsense. What do you mean to do? Why don't you answer my letters?"

"Because you make too much of a fuss. Because you are too portentous. Now I like a quiet life. That is why I am here; I came here to have a little peace."

"Well, I don't understand you at all," his sister said, in a hopeless kind of way. "I could understand it better if you were one of those young men who are attracted by every pretty face they see, and are always in a simmering condition of love-making. But you are not like that. And I thought you were proud to think of Yolande as your future wife. I can remember one day on board the *daha-beeyah*. You were anxious enough then. What has changed you?"

"I do not know that I am changed," said he, either with indifference or an affectation of indifference.

"Is *Shena Van* in Inverness?" said Mrs. Graham, sharply.

"I suppose Miss Stewart has as good a right to be in Inverness as anybody else," he said, formally.

"Do you mean to say you don't know whether she is in Inverness or not?"

"I did not say nothing of the kind."

"Have you spoken to her?"

"Don't keep on bothering," he said, impatiently. "Miss Stewart is in Inverness; and if you want to know, I have not spoken a single word to her. Is that enough?"

"Why are you here, then? What are you going to do?"

"Nothing."

"Really this is too bad, Archie," his sister said, in deep vexation. "You are throwing away the best prospects a young man ever had, and all for what? For temper!"

"I don't call it temper at all," said he; "I call it self-respect. I have told you already that I would not degrade Yolande Winterbourne so far as to plead for her being received by my family. A pretty idea!"

"There would have been no necessity to plead if only you had exercised a little patience and tact and judgment.

And surely it is not too late yet. Just think how much pleasanter it would be for you and for all of us in the future if you were rather more on an equal footing with Jim—I mean as regards money. I don't see why you shouldn't have your clothes made at Poole's, as Jim has. Why shouldn't you have chamois-leather pockets in your overcoat as well as he?"

"I can do without chamois-leather pockets," he answered.

"Very well," said she, suddenly changing the mode of her attack; "but what you cannot do without is the reputation of having acted as a gentleman. You are bound in honor to keep faith with Yolande Winterbourne."

"I am bound in honor not to allow her to subject herself to insult," he retorted.

"Oh, there will be nothing of the kind!" his sister exclaimed. "How can you be so unreasonable?"

"You don't know the worst of it," said he, gloomily. "I only got to know the other day. Yolande's mother is alive—an opium drinker. Off her head at times; kicks up rows in the streets; and they are helpless, because they have all been in this conspiracy to keep it back from Yolande—"

"You don't mean that, Archie!" his sister exclaimed, looking very grave.

"I do, though. And, you know, his lordship might in time be got to overlook the Radical papa, but a mamma who might at any moment figure in a police court—I think not even you could get him to stand that."

"But, Archie, this is dreadful!" Mrs. Graham exclaimed again.

"I daresay it is. It is the fact, however."

"And that is why he was so anxious to get Yolande away from London," she said, thoughtfully. "Poor man, what a terrible life to lead!"

She was silent for some time; she was reading the story more clearly now—his continual travelling with Yolande, his liking for long voyages, his wish that the girl should live in the Highlands after her marriage. And perhaps, also, his warm and obvious approval of that marriage—she knew that fathers with only daughters were not always so complaisant.

Two or three strangers came into the reading-room.

"Archie," said she, waking up from a reverie, "let us go out for a stroll. I must think over this."

He went and fetched his hat and stick; and the maid having been directed to go into the hotel and wait her mistress's return, the brother and sister went outside and proceeded to walk leisurely through the bright and cheerful little town in the direction of the harbor.

"What is your own view of the matter?" she said at length, and somewhat cautiously.

"Oh, my position is perfectly clear. I can have nothing to do with any such system of secrecy and terrorism. I told Jack Melville that when he came as a sort of ambassador. I said I would on no account whatever subject myself to such unnecessary risks and anxieties. My contention was that, first of all, the whole truth should be told to Yoland; then if that woman keeps quiet, good and well; if not, we can appeal to the law and have her forcibly confined. There is nothing more simple; and I daresay it could be kept out of the papers. But then, you see, my dear Mrs. Polly, there is also the possibility that it might get into the papers; and if you add on this little possibility to what his lordship already thinks about the whole affair, you may guess what use all your beautiful persuasion and tact and conciliation would be."

"I don't see," said Mrs. Graham, slowly, "why papa should know anything about it. It does not concern him. Many families have ne'er-do-well or disreputable members, and simply nothing is said about them, and they are supposed not to exist. Friends of the family ignore them; they are simply not mentioned, until in time they are forgotten altogether; it is as if they did not exist. I don't see why papa should be told anything about it."

"Oh, I am for having everything straightforward," said he. "I don't wish to have anything thrown in my teeth afterward. But the point isn't worth discussing in the present state of his lordship's temper, and it isn't likely to be so long as that old cat is at his elbow. Well, now, that is what Mr. Winterbourne might fairly say. He might say we had no right to object to his having a half-maniac wife in his family so long as we had an entirely maniac aunt—who is also a cantankerous old beast—in ours."

"Archie, I must ask you to be more decent in your language!" his sister said, angrily. "Is that the way the young men talk at Balliol now?"

"I guess it's the way they talk everywhere when they happen to have the luxury of having an Aunt Colquhoun as a relative."

"My dear Master, you won't go very far to put matters straight if you continue in that mood."

"Am I anxious to go far to put matters straight?"

"You ought to be—for the sake of Miss Winterbourne," said his sister, stiffly.

"No," he answered; "it is they who ought to be—for the sake of Lynn."

Well, she saw there was not much to be done with him just then; and, indeed, there was something in what he had told her that wanted thinking over. But in the mean time she was greatly relieved to find that he had not (as she had suspected) resumed any kind of relations with Shena Van, and she was anxious above all things to get him away from Inverness.

"When are you going back to Lynn?" she asked.

"I don't know," he answered, carelessly.

"Now do be sensible, Archie, and go down with me in this afternoon's steamer. All this trouble will be removed in good time, and you need not make the operation unnecessarily difficult. I am going down to Fort Augustus by the three-o'clock boat; you can come with me as far as Foyers."

"Oh, I don't mind," he said. "I have had a little peace and quiet; I can afford to go back to the menagerie. Only there won't be anybody to meet me at Foyers."

"You can get a dog-cart from Mrs. Elder," his sister said. "And if you were very nice you would take me back to your hotel now and give me some lunch, for I am frightfully hungry. Do you know at what hour I had to get up in order to catch the boat at Fort Augustus?"

"I don't see why you did it."

"No, perhaps not. But when you are as old as I am you will see with different eyes. You will see what chances you had at this moment, that you seem willing to let slip through your fingers. And why?—Because you have not enough patience to withstand a little opposition. But you knew perfectly well when you asked Yoland Winterbourne to marry you, on board the dahabeeyah, that papa might very probably have objections, and you took the risk; and now when you find there are objections and opposition I don't think it is quite fair for you to throw the whole thing up, and leave the girl deserted and every one disappointed.

And it all depends on yourself. You have only to be patient and conciliatory; when they see that you are not to be affected by their opposition they will give in, in time. And as soon as the people go away from Inverstry I will come over and help you."

He said nothing. So they went back and had lunch at the hotel; and in due time, Mrs. Graham's maid accompanying, they drove along to the canal, and got on board the little steamer. They had a beautiful sail down Loch Ness on this still, golden afternoon. But perhaps the picturesqueness of the scenery was a trifle familiar to them; in fact, they regarded the noble loch mostly as an excellent highway for the easy transference of casks and hampers from Inverness, and their chief impression of the famous falls of Foyers was as to the height of the hill that their horses had to climb in going and coming between Foyers and Lynn.

As they were slowly steaming in to Foyer's pier pretty Mrs. Graham said,

"I wonder if that can be Yolande herself in that dog-cart? Yes, it is; that is her white Rubens hat. Lucky for you, Master; if she gives you a lift, it will save you hiring."

"I don't think," said he, with a faint touch of scorn, "that the mutual excess of courtesy which has been interchanged between Lynn Towers and Allt-nam-Ba would warrant me in accepting such a favor. But the cat bows when she and Yolande pass. Oh yes, she does as much as that."

"And she will do a little more in time, if only you are reasonable," said his sister, who still hoped that all would be well.

Young Leslie had merely a hand-bag with him. When he left the steamer he walked along the pier by himself until he reached the road, and there he found Yolande seated in the dog-cart. He went up and shook hands with her and she seemed very pleased to see him.

"You are going to Lynn? Shall I drive you out?"

"No, thank you," said he, somewhat stiffly. "I will not trouble you. I can get a trap at the hotel."

She looked surprised, and then, perhaps, a trifle reserved.

"Oh, very well," said she, with calm politeness. "The hotel carriages have more room than this little one. Good-by."

Then it suddenly occurred to him that he had no quarrel

with her. She might be the indirect cause of all this trouble and confusion that had befallen him, but she was certainly not the direct cause. She was in absolute ignorance of it, in fact. And so he lingered for a second, and then he said, looking up,

“You have no one coming by the steamer?”

“Oh no,” she said; but she did not renew the invitation; indeed, there was just a touch of coldness in her manner.

“If I thought I should not overload the dog-cart,” said he, rather shamefacedly, “I would beg of you to give me a seat. I understand the stag’s head has come down by this steamer. I saw it at Macleay’s this morning.”

“It is that I have come in for—that only,” she said. “There is plenty of room, if you wish.”

So without more ado he put his hand-bag into the dog-cart, behind, and there also was deposited the stag’s head that Sandy was now bringing along from the steamer. Then, when the lad had gone to the horse’s head, Yolande got down, for she always walked this steep hill, whether going or coming, and of course no men-folk could remain in the vehicle when she was on foot. So she and the Master now set out together.

“I hope they have been having good sport at Allt-nam-Ba,” he said.

“Oh yes.”

It was clear that his unaccountable refusal of her invitation had surprised her, and her manner was distinctly reserved. Seeing that, he took the more pains to please her.

“Macleay has done the stag’s head very well,” said he “and I have no doubt Mr. Shortlands will be proud of it. Pity it isn’t a royal; but still it is a good head. It is curious how people’s ideas change as they go on preserving stag’s heads. At first it is everything they shoot, no matter what, and every head must be stuffed. Then they begin to find that expensive, and they take to boiling the heads, keeping only the skull and the horns. Then they begin to improve their collection by weeding out the second and third rate heads, which they give to their friends. And then, in the end, they are quite disappointed with anything short of a royal. I went in to Macleay’s a day or two ago and asked him to push on with that head. I thought Mr. Shortlands would like to see how it looked, hung up in the lodge, and I thought you might like to see it too.”

"It was very kind of you," she said.

"Has the great hare drive come off?" he asked—and surely he was trying to be as pleasant as he could be. "Oh, I think you said it was to be to-morrow. I should like to have gone with them; but, to tell you the truth, Yolande, I am a little bit ashamed. Your father has been too kind to me; that is the fact. Of course if we had the forest in our own hands it would not matter so much, for your father then might have a return invitation to go for a day or two's deer-stalking. But with everything let, you see, I am helpless; and your father's kindness to me has been almost embarrassing. Then there is another thing. My father and aunt are odd people. They live too much in seclusion; they have got out of the way of entertaining friends, because, with the forest and the shooting always let, they could scarcely ask any one to come and live in such a remote place. It is a pity. Look at the other families in Inverness-shire; look at Lord Lovat, look at Lord Seafield, look at the Mackintosh, and these; they go out into the world; they don't box themselves up in one place. But then we are poor folk; that is one reason, perhaps; and my father has just one mania in his life—to improve the condition of Lynn; and so he has not gone about, perhaps, as others might have done."

Now it sounded well in her ears that this young man should be inclined to make excuses for his father, even when, as she suspected, the domestic relations at the Towers were somewhat strained, and she instantly adopted a more friendly tone toward him.

"Ah," said she, "what a misfortune yesterday! The red shepherd came running in to say that there were some deer up the glen of the Allt Crom; and of course every one hurried away—my papa and Mr. Shortlands to two of the passes. What a misfortune! there being no one with the beaters. They came upon them—yes, a stag and four hinds—quite calmly standing and nibbling, and away—away they went up the hill, not going near either of the guns. Was it not sad?"

"Not for the deer."

"And my papa not to have a stag's head to take back as well as Mr. Shortlands!" she said, in great disappointment.

"Oh, but if you like he shall have a finer head to take back than any he would be likely to get in a half a dozen

years of those odd chances. I will give him one I shot—with three horns. I have always had a clear understanding about that: anything I shoot is mine—it doesn't belong to the furniture of Lynn Towers. And I will give that head to your father, if you like; it is a very remarkable one, I can assure you."

"That is kind of you," she said. They were on more friendly terms now; she had forgiven him.

When they got to the summit of the hill they got into the dog-cart, and descended the other side, and drove away through the wooded and rocky country. She seemed pleased to be on better terms with him, and he, on his part, was particularly good-natured and friendly. But when they drew near to Gress she grew a little more thoughtful. She could not quite discard those hints she had received. Then her father's anxious trouble—was that merely caused by the disagreement that had broken out between the Master and his relatives? If that were all, matters would mend, surely. She, at all events, was willing to let time work his healing wonders; she was in no hurry, and certainly her pride was not deeply wounded. She rather liked the Master's excuses for those old people who lived so much out of the world. And she was distinctly glad that now there was no suspicion of coldness between herself and him.

There was no one visible at Gress, and they drove on without stopping. When they arrived at the bridge the Master got down to open the swinging iron-gate, telling Sandy to keep his seat, and it was not worth his while to get up again.

"Now," said Yolande, brightly, "I hope you will change your mind and come along to-morrow morning to Allt-nam-Ba, and go with the gentlemen, after all. It is to be a great affair."

"I will see if I can manage it," said he, evasively; and then they bade each other good-by, and she drove on.

But although they had seen no one at Gress, Jack Melville had seen them. He was far up the hillside, seated on some bracken among the rocks, and his elbows were on his knees, and his head resting on his hands. He had gone away up there to be perfectly alone—to think over all that he was to say to Yolande on the next day. It was a terrible task, and he knew it.

He saw them drive by, and his heart had a great pity for this girl.

"The evening is coming over the sky now," he was thinking, as he looked around, "and she has left behind her the last of the light-hearted days of her life."

CHAPER XXXII.

FABULA NARRATUR.

EARLY next morning (for he was anxious to get this painful thing over) he walked slowly and thoughtfully up to Allt-nam-Ba. He knew she was at home, for the dog-cart had gone by with only Sandy in it. Perhaps she might be indoors, working at the microscope he had lent her, or arranging her plants.

She had seen him come up the strath; she was at the door awaiting him, her face radiant.

"Ah! but why are you so late?" she cried. "They are all away, shepherds and gillies and all, two hours ago."

"I did not mean to go with them. I have come to have a chat with you, Yolande, if you will let me."

He spoke carelessly, but there was something in his look that she noticed; and when she had preceded him into the little drawing-room, she turned and regarded him.

"What is it? Is it serious?" she said, scanning his face.

Well, he had carefully planned how he would approach the subject, but at this moment all his elaborate designs went clean away from his brain. A far more happy expedient than any he had thought of had that instant occurred to him. He would tell her this story as of some one else.

"It is serious in a way," said he, "for I am troubled about an unfortunate plight that a friend of mine is in. Why should I bother you about it? But still you might give me your advice."

"My advice?" she said. "If it would be of any service to you, yes, yes. But how could it be? What experience of the world have I had?"

"It isn't a question of experience of the world; it is a question of human nature mostly," said he. "And this

friend of mine is a girl just about your own age. You might tell me what you would do in the same circumstances."

"But I might do something very foolish."

"I only want to know what you would naturally feel inclined to do. That is the question. You could easily tell me that; and I could not find it out for myself—no, not if I were to set all my electric machines going."

"Ah! well, I will listen very patiently, if I am to be the judge," said she. "And I am glad it is not anything worse. I thought, when you came in, it was something very serious."

He did not wish to be too serious; and indeed he managed to tell her the whole story in a fashion so plain, matter-of-fact, and unconcerned that she never for an instant dreamed of its referring to herself. Of course he left out all details and circumstances that might positively have given her a clue, and only described the central situation as between mother and daughter. And Yolande had a great compassion for that poor debased woman, and some pity, too, for the girl who was kept in ignorance of her mother being alive; and she sat, with her hands clasped on her knees, regarding these two imaginary figures, as it were, and too much interested in them to remember that her counsel was being asked concerning them.

"Now, you see, Yolande," he continued, "it appears that one of the results of using those damnable—I beg your pardon—I really beg your pardon—I mean those—those poisonous drugs is that the will entirely goes. The poor wretches have no command over themselves; they live in a dream; they will promise anything—they will make the most solemn vows of abstinence—and be quite unable to resist the temptation. And the law practically puts no check on the use of these fiendish things; even when the public-houses are closed, the chemist's shop is open. Now, Yolande, I have a kind of theory or project with regard to that poor woman. I don't know whether the doctors would approve of it, but it is a fancy I have: let us suppose that that poor wretch of a mother does not quite understand that her daughter has grown up to be a woman—most likely she still regards her as a child; that is a very common thing—at all events, she is not likely to know anything as to what her daughter is like. And suppose that this daughter were to go to her mother and declare

herself: do you not think that that would be enough to startle her out of her dream? and do you not think that in the bewilderment of finding their relations reversed—the child, grown to be a woman, assuming a kind of protection and authority and command over the broken-down creature—she might be got to rely on that help, and encouraged and strengthened by constant care and affection to retrieve herself? Don't you think it is possible? To be startled out of that dream by shame and horror; then the wonder of having that beautiful daughter for her champion and protectress; then the continual reward of her companionship: don't you think it is possible?"

"Oh yes—oh yes, surely!" said the girl. "Surely you are right!"

"But then, Yolande, I am afraid you don't understand what a terrible business it will be. It will demand the most constant watchfulness, for these drugs are easy to get, and people that use them are very cunning. And it will require a long time—perhaps years—before one could be certain that the woman was saved. Now look at it from the other side. Might not one say, 'That poor woman's life is gone, is done for: why should you destroy this other young life in trying to save a wreck? Why should you destroy one happy human existence in trying to rescue the mere remnant of another human existence, that would be worthless and useless even if you succeed? Why should not the girl live her own life in peace and happiness?'"

"But that is not what you would say; that is not what you think," she said, confidently. "And do you ask what the girl would think?—for I can tell you that. Oh yes, I can tell you—she would despise any one who offered her such a choice?"

"But she would be in ignorance, Yolande; she would know nothing about it."

"She ought not to be in ignorance, then! Why do they not tell her? Why not ask herself what she will do? Ah, and all this time the poor woman left to herself—it was not right—it was not just."

"But she has not been left to herself, Yolande. Everything has been tried—everything but this. And that is why I have come to ask you what you think a girl in that position would naturally do. What would she do if she were told?"

"There cannot be a doubt," she exclaimed. "Oh, there

cannot be a doubt! You—I know what your feeling is, what your opinion is. And yet you hesitate? Why? Go, and you will see what her answer will be.”

“Do you mean to say, Yolande,” he said, deliberately, and regarding her at the same time, “that you have no doubt whatever? You say I am to go and ask this young girl to sacrifice her life—or it may be only a part, but that the best part, of her life—on this chance of rescuing a poor broken-down creature—”

“*Her mother,*” said Yolande.

“What will she think of me, I wonder?” he said, absently.

The answer was decisive:—

“If she is the girl that you say, oh, I know how she will be grateful to you. She will bless you. She will look on you as the best and dearest of her friends, who had courage when the others were afraid, who had faith in her.”

“Yolande,” said he, almost solemnly, “you have decided for yourself.”

“I?” she said, in amazement.

“Your mother is alive.”

She uttered a sharp cry—of pain, it seemed.

“My mother—my mother—*like that!*”

For a time this agony of shame and horror deprived her of all power of utterance; the blow had fallen heavily. Her most cherished and beautiful ideals lay broken at her feet; in their place was this stern and ghastly picture that he had placed before her mental eyes. He had not softened down any of the details; it was necessary that she should know the truth. And she had been so much interested in the story, as he patiently put it before her, that now she had but little difficulty—alas! she had no difficulty at all—in placing herself in the position of that imaginary daughter, and realizing what she had to face.

He waited. He had faith in her courage; but he would give her time. This was a sudden thing to happen to a girl of nineteen.

“Well,” she said at length, in a low voice, “I will go.”

Her hands were tightly clunched together, but she showed no symptom of faltering. Presently she said, in the same steady, constrained way,—

“I will go at once. Does papa know you were coming here to-day to tell me?”

“Yes. He could not do it himself, Yolande. He has

suffered fearfully during these long years in order to hide this from you ; he thought it would only pain you to know—that you could do no good.”

“ What induced him to change his mind ? ”

He was embarrassed ; he had not expected the question. She glanced at his face.

“ Was that the objection at Lynn Towers ? ” she said, calmly.

“ No, Yolande, no ; it was not. I daresay Lord Lynn does not quite approve of your father’s politics ; but that has nothing to do with you.”

“ Then it was your idea that I should be told ? ”

“ Well,” said he, uneasily, “ possibly your father imagined that Archie Leslie might not like—might think he had been unfairly treated if he were not told—and then I was his friend, don’t you see, and they mentioned the matter to me—and—and being an outsider, I was reluctant to interfere at first—but then, when they spoke of telling you, I said to myself that I knew, or I fancied I knew what a girl like Yolande Winterbourne would be sure to do in such circumstances—and so I thought I would venture the suggestion to them, and—and if it turned out to be so, then I might be of some little help to you.”

That was cleverly done ; he had not told her it was the Master of Lynn who had insisted on that disclosure.

And now she was gathering her courage to her, though still she maintained a curious sort of constrained reserve as though she were keeping a tight hold over her feelings.

“ I suppose,” she said slowly, “ it is your idea I should go there—alone ? ”

“ If you are not afraid, Yolande—if you are not afraid,” he said, anxiously.

“ I am not afraid.”

“ Don’t you see, Yolande,” he said, eagerly, “ if you go accompanied by a stranger, she may think it is a solicitor—people in that weak mental state are usually suspicious—and if you go with your father she would probably only consider it a repetition of former interviews that came to nothing. No ; it is the appearance of her daughter that will startle her into sudden consciousness of what she is. Then don’t mind those people she is with. Don’t be afraid of them. They dare not detain her. You will have a policeman waiting outside ; and your maid will go into the house with you and wait in the passage. You will have to assume authority.

Your mother may be a bit dazed, poor woman; you must take her with you; let no one interfere. Now do you think you have nerve for that—all by yourself?”

“Oh, yes, I think so,” she said calmly. “But I must begin at the beginning. I cannot leave the lodge without putting some one in charge.”

“I will send up Mrs. Bell, she will be delighted.”

“Ah, will you?” she said, with a quick glance of gratitude breaking through her forced composure. “If only she would be so kind as to do that! She knows everything that is wanted.”

“Don’t trouble yourself about that for a moment,” he said. “Mrs. Bell will be delighted; there is nothing she would not do for you.”

“Then I must take away my things with me. Perhaps I shall not see Allt-nam-Ba again. My life will be altered now. Where do I go when I reach London?”

“I should say the hotel your father and you were at once or twice, in Albemarle Street. But are you sure, Yolande, you would rather not have some one go with you to London and see you to your quarters in the hotel? why, I would myself—with pleasure, for my assistant Dalrymple gets on very well in the school now. Or Mr. Shortlands.—he is going south soon, is he not? I would not ask your father; it would be too painful for him.”

“No,” she said, “I do not want any one. Jane and I will do very well. Besides, I could not wait for Mr. Shortlands. I am going at once.

“At once! Surely you will take time to consider—”

“I am going to-morrow,” she said, “if Mrs. Bell will be so kind as to come and take my place.”

“Don’t be so precipitate, Yolande,” he said, with some anxiety. “I have put all this before you for your consideration, and I should feel I was burdened with a terrible responsibility if you were to do anything you might afterward regret. Will you consult Mr. Shortlands?”

She shook her head.

“Will you take a week to think over it?”

“No; why?” she said, simply. “Did I not consider when you were telling me the story of this imaginary girl? Had I any doubt? No. I knew what she would decide. I know what I have decided. What use is there in delay? Ah, if there is to be the good come out of it that you have imagined for me, should I not haste? When one is perish-

ing you do not think twice if you can hold out your hand. Do you think that I regret—that I am sorry to leave a little comfort behind—that I am afraid to take a little trouble? Surely you do not think that of me? Why I am anxious to go now is to see at once what can be done; to know the worst or the best; to try. And now—I shall not be speaking to my papa about it; that would only give pain—will you tell me what I should do in all the small particulars? I am not likely to forget.”

That he could do easily, for he had thought enough over the matter. He gave her the most minute instructions, guarding against this or that possibility, and she listened mutely and attentively, with scarcely the interruption of a question. Then, at length, he rose to say good-by, and she rose too. He did not notice that, as she did so, her lips quivered for the briefest second.

He hesitated.

“If you are going to-morrow, Yolande,” said he, “I will see you as you pass. I will look out for you. I should like to say good-by to you; it may be for a long time.”

“It may be for always,” she said, with her eyes cast down; “perhaps I shall never be back here again.”

“And I am sending you away into all this trouble and grief. How can I help knowing that it is I who am doing it? And perhaps, day after day and night after night, I shall be trying to justify myself, when I am thinking over it, and wondering where you are; and perhaps I shall not succeed very well.”

“But it is I who justify you—that is enough,” she said, in a low voice. “Did I not decide for myself? And I know that in your heart you think I am doing right; and if you are afraid for me—well, that is only kindness—such as that you have always shown to me.”

Here she stopped; and he did not see that her hands were clinched firm, as she stood there opposite him, with her eyes cast down.

“And whatever happens, Yolande—you may be in pain and grief, and perhaps all you may endure may only end in bitter disappointment—well, I hope you will not imagine that I came to you with my proposal unthinkingly. I have thought over it night and day. I did not come to you offhand.”

“Ah, then,” said she, quickly, “and you think it is necessary to justify yourself—you, to me, as if I did not

know you as well as I know myself! Do you think I do not know you and understand you—because I am only a girl?” Her forced composure was breaking down altogether; she was trembling somewhat; and now there were tears running down her cheeks, despite herself, though she regarded him bravely, as if she would not acknowledge that. “And you asked me what the girl you spoke of would think of the man who came to her and showed her what she should do. Did I not answer? I said she would know then that he was the one who had faith in her; that she would give him her gratitude; that she would know who was her best and truest friend. And now, just as you and I are about to say good-by, perhaps forever, you think it is necessary for you to justify yourself to me—you, my best friend—my more than friend—”

And then—ah, who can tell how such things happen, or which is to bear the blame?—his arms were round her trembling figure, and she was sobbing violently on his breast. And what was this wild thing she said, in the bewilderment of her grief: “Oh, why, why was my life given away before I ever saw you?”

“Yolande,” said he, with his face very pale, “I am going to say something; for this is our last meeting. What can a few words matter—my darling!—if we are never to see each other again? I love you. I shall love you while I have life. Why should I not say it for this once? I blinded myself; I tried to think it friendship—friendship, and the world was just filled with light whenever I saw you! It is our last meeting; you will let me say this for once—how can it harm you?”

She shrank out of his embrace; she sank down on the couch there, and turned away her head and hid her face in her hand.

“Go! go!” she murmured. “What have I done? For pity’s sake go—and forget? Forget!”

He knelt down by the side of the couch; and he was paler than ever now.

“Yolande, it is for you to forget and forgive. I have been a traitor to my friend; I have been a traitor to you. You shall never see me again. God bless you!—and good-by!”

He kissed her hair, and rose, and got himself out of the house. As he went down that wide strath—his eyes fixed on nothing, like one demented, and his mind whirling this

way and that amid clouds of remorse and reproach and immeasurable pity—it seemed to him that he felt on his brow the weight of the brand of Cain.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

PREPARATIONS.

AND as for her: she was stunned almost into unconsciousness by this shock of self-abasement and distress. She lay on the sofa, her face covered with her hands; she could not face the light. What was she then?—she who hitherto had been so fearless and so proud. A flirt, a jilt, a light o' love—that was how she saw herself; and then there was herself; and then there was a kind of despair over the misery she had wrought, and a yearning to have him back to implore his pity and his forgiveness; and then sudden resolves to free herself in another direction, at any cost of penitence and humiliation. She began to compose hurried, brief messages, though the throbbing brain and the shame-stricken soul could scarce decide between the fitness of them. These were some of them,—

“DEAR PAPA,—I have gone away. Tell Archie not to think any more about me. YOLANDE.”

And then again,—

“DEAR ARCHIE—I send you back the engagement ring: I am not worthy to be your wife. I am sorry if I have caused you any disappointment, but you have less to regret than I have.”

And then again—to one not named at all,—

“To-day I go away. Never think of me again, or of what has happened. Forgive me; that is all.”

And then she began to think—if this wild torture of suggestions could be called thinking—of the undertaking that lay before her, and the thought of it was something of a relief. There would be an occupation, urgent, continuous, demanding all her attention; in time, and in a measure, she might school herself to forget. Perhaps, if this duty turned out to be a very sad and painful one, it might be taken by

those whom she had wronged as a sort of penance? She was prepared to suffer. She thought she deserved to suffer. Had she not proved a traitor to the man whom she had promised to marry? Had she not brought misery to this best and dearest of all her friends, to this fine and noble nature that she had learned to know, and that by her idleness and carelessness—the carelessness of a vain coquette and light-o'-love, heedless of consequences? What would he think of her? She could only vaguely recall the reproaches he had heaped upon himself; but she knew that he was in distress, and that she was the cause of it. And perhaps if there were trials in store for her, if there was suffering in store for her, perhaps he would never know that she rather welcomed that, and was content to receive her punishment? Perhaps he would never know how grieved she was? It was over and done, not past recall. And she knew that henceforth her life would be quite different to her.

How long she lay there in that misery of her remorse and despair she probably never knew, but at last she forced herself to rise. She was not thinking of her appearance; she did not know that her face was haggard and pale; that an expression never before there was there now; that her eyes were no longer the eyes of a child. She was going away—this was all she was compelling herself to think about—and there were preparations to be made. And so in a slow and mechanical fashion she began to put a few things together, even in this drawing-room, although every other minute her heart seemed to stand still as she came upon some little trifle that was associated with him—something he had done for her, something that he had brought her, showing his continued solicitude and thoughtfulness and affection. Why had she not seen? Why did she not understand? And then she began to think of the evenings he had spent at the house, and of the walks they had had together down the wide valley; and she began to know why it was that these evenings had seemed so rich in happy human sympathies, and why the valley had appeared so wondrous and beautiful, and why her life at Allt-nam-Ba had so strange and unnamable a charm thrown over it. And he—he had been blind too. She knew that he could not have imagined it possible that he was betraying his friend; otherwise he would have fled from the place. She was standing quite still now, her eyes distraught, and she was trying

recall the very tones in which he had said, "I love you." That was the misery of it, and the cause of her shame, and the just reason for her remorse and self-abasement; and yet—and yet somewhere or other deep down in her heart there was a curious touch of pride that she heard those words. If circumstances had been different—to be approved, to have won the affection, to be loved by one like that! And then a passion of selfcontempt seized her, and she said to herself: "You to think yourself worthy of such a love! You, who can allow yourself to think of such a thing with that ring on your finger!"

This also was strange, that, amid all the preparations for departure that she was now mechanically making, she should be possessed by a singular anxiety that Mrs. Bell, when she came to Allt-nam-Ba, should find the household arrangements in the most perfect order. Had she some vague hope or fancy, then, that some day or other, when she should be far enough away from Allt-nam-Ba and Gress and Lynn, and not likely to see any of them again, her name might be mentioned casually by this good woman, and mentioned perhaps with some slight word of approval? When she drew out for Mrs. Bell's guidance a list of her arrangements with the Inverness tradesmen, she was dissatisfied with the mere handwriting of it (for indeed her fingers trembled somewhat), and she destroyed it and wrote out another, and that she destroyed, and wrote out another—until the handwriting was fairly clear and correct.

Her maid Jane was a fool of a woman, but even she could see that her young mistress was faint-looking, and even ill-looking, and again and again she besought her to desist from these preparations, and to go and have some lunch, which awaited her in the dining-room.

"You know, miss," said she, "You can't go before your papa comes home, and then it would be far too late to catch the steamer. You can't go before the morning; and I am sure, miss, you will be quite ill and unable to travel if you don't eat something."

Well, Yolande went into the dining-room, and sat down at the table; but she could not eat or drink anything; and in a minute or two she was back again in her bedroom superintending the packing of her trunks. However she was in time compelled to desist. The mental agitation of the morning, combined with this want of food, produced the natural result; she gradually acquired a violent headache

—a headache so violent that further superintendance of packing or anything else was entirely out of the question. Now it was the literal fact that she had never had a headache in her life—except once, at the chateau, when a large volume she was reaching for in the library fell and struck her—and she did not know what to do; but she fancied that by tying a wet towel round her head she might lessen the throbbing of the temples; and this she did, lying down the while. Jane stole out of the room, fancying her young mistress might now get some sleep. The girl was not thinking of sleep.

Mr. Winterbourne and John Shortlands were on their way back from the hill.

“I scarcely know what has happened to-day,” Mr. Winterbourne was saying. “All the time I have been thinking of our going back. And I know what I shall find when I go back—the wreck of the happiness that I have so carefully nursed all through these years. It is like hedging round a garden, and growing flowers there, and all at once, some morning, you find the place trampled down and a wilderness. I hope I am not unjust, Shortlands, but I think he might have spared her.”

“Who?”

“Young Leslie. I think he might have spared her. It was not much. Don’t you think—out of consideration—”

“Nonsense, man. What young Leslie has done seems to me, on reflection, perfectly, just, and right, and reasonable,” said John Shortlands, telling a lie in the calmest manner possible. “The young people ought not to be hampered in starting life. A little trouble now—what is that? And it will be better for you too, Winterbourne. You would have kept on worrying yourself. You would have been always apprehensive about something. You would have reproached yourself for not telling him.”

“I am not thinking of myself,” Yolande’s father said, rather wistfully. “I could have borne all that; I am used to it. It is about her I am thinking. I remember in Egypt away up at that still place, wondering whether all her life might not be just as quiet and uneventful and happy as it was there,”

“The fact is, Winterbourne,” said John Shortlands, bluntly, “you are just mad about that child of yours, and you expect the world to be changed all on her account; whereas every reasonable being knows that she must take

her chance of trouble as well as others. And this—what is this? Is it so great an affair? You don't know yet whether she will follow out that suggestion of Melville's. Perhaps she won't. If you would rather she should not, no doubt she will abide by your wishes. By this time she has been told. The secret is at an end. Leslie has had what he wanted: what the devil more can he ask for?"

But the asperity of this last phrase rather betrayed his private opinion; and so he added quickly:—

"However, as you say, she is more likely to go. Well, why not look at the brighter side of things? There is a possibility. Oh, you needn't shake your head; when I look at the whole thing from Melville's point of view I can see the possibility. He's a devilish long-headed fellow that, and a devilish fine fellow too; not many men would have bothered their heads as he has done. I wouldn't. If you and I weren't old friends, do you think I would have interfered? I'd have let you go on your own way. But now, old chap, I think you'll find Yolande ready to go; and you'd better not make too much fuss about it, and frighten the girl. I shall be in London; I shall see she has plenty of money."

"It seems so inhuman," her father said, absently.

"What?"

"That I should remain here shooting, and she be allowed to go away there alone."

"My dear fellow she'll get on twenty times better without you," said Shortlands, plainly. "It seems to me that what you say Melville pointed out to you, was just the perfection of good advice. You'll do well to abide by it."

"But he does not know Yolande as I do," her father said.

"He seems to have made a thundering good guess, anyway."

"I don't mean that. He does not know how she has been brought up—always looked after and cared for. She has never been allowed to shift about for herself. Oh, as regards herself I can see well enough that he imagines she has certain qualities, and perhaps he thinks it rather fine to make experiments. Well, I don't. I don't see why Yolande should be made the victim of any experiment; I am content with her as she is."

"You'd better see what she says about it herself."

When they reached the lodge Yolande was not, as

usual, standing in the porch to welcome them home from the hill.

"Please, sir," said the maid, "Miss Winterbourne has a headache, and says would you excuse her coming down to dinner."

He stood irresolute for a second or two, obviously greatly disturbed; then he slowly and thoughtfully went up the stairs, and gently knocked at the door of her room.

"May I come in, Yolande?"

She had just time to untie the wet towel from her head, to smooth her hair, and sit up in bed.

"Yes, papa."

He entered, went over and drew a chair near to her, and sat down.

"I am sorry for you Yolande," he said in a low voice, and his eyes were nervously bent on the ground.

"Why, papa?"

She spoke in quite a cheerful way; and as he had not suffered his eyes to meet hers, he was unaware how that cheerfulness was belied by the strange expression in them. She was forcing herself to make light of this matter; she would not have him troubled. And perhaps, indeed, to her this was in truth a light matter, as compared with that tragic disclosure and its consequences which seemed to have cut away from her at once, and forever, the shining and rose-colored years of her youth.

"If I erred, Yolande," said he, "in keeping all this back from you, I did it for the best."

"Do you need to say that to me, papa?" she answered, with some touch of reproach.

"I thought it would save you needless pain," said he; and then, as he ventured to lift his eyes, he caught sight of the pale, anguish-stricken face, and he nearly cried aloud in his sudden alarm, "Yolande, are you ill?"

"Oh no, papa;" and she did try her best to look very cheerful. "I have a headache—that is all; and it is not so bad as it was. I—I have been seeing things packed, and making arrangements."

"You are going, Yolande?" he said, with a sinking of the heart.

"That, again, it is unnecessary for you to ask me," the girl said, simply.

"But not at once, Yolande?" said he, glancing at an open trunk. "Not at once?"

"To-morrow morning, papa," she answered. "Oh, but I assure you, you will be put to no trouble, no trouble at all. Mrs. Bell is coming from Gress to see everything right. And I have made out lists for her; it is all arranged; you will not know any difference—"

"Yolande, you will make me angry if you talk like that. What signifies our comfort? It is the notion of your going away by yourself—"

"Jane goes with me. That is all arranged also," she said. "I have no fear."

"Listen, now, Yolande. I don't disapprove of your going. We have tried everything, and failed; if there is a chance of your succeeding—well, perhaps one might say it is your duty to go. Poor child, I would rather have had you know nothing about it; but that is all over now. Well, you see, Yolande, if you go, there must be no unnecessary risk or trouble about your going. I have been thinking that perhaps Mr. Melville may be a little too imaginative. He sees things strongly. And in insisting that you should go alone, why, there may be a danger that he has been carried away by a—by a—well, I don't know how to put it, except that he may be so anxious to have this striking appeal made to your poor mother as to be indifferent to ordinary precautions. Why should you go friendless and alone? Why should I remain amusing myself here?"

"Because you would be of no use to me, papa," said she, calmly. "I know what I have to do."

"Why, then, should you not wait for a few days, and travel south with Mr. Shortlands?"

"Oh, I must go at once, papa—at once!" she exclaimed. "I must go to-morrow. And Jane goes with me. Is it not simple enough?"

"Yolande, you can not be left in London with absolutely no one to whom you can appeal. The least you must do is to take a letter to Lawrence & Lang. They will do anything you want; they will let you have what you want; if there is any hiring of lodgings or anything of that kind, they will send one of their clerks. You cannot be stranded in London without the chance of assistance, you must go to Lawrence & Lang."

"I may have to go to them—that also is arranged. But they must not interfere, they must not come with me; that was not Mr. Melville's idea," she said; though the pale face turned still paler as she forced herself to utter the name.

“ Mr. Melville ! ” he said, angrily. “ You seem to think the whole wisdom of the world is centred in Mr. Melville ! I don’t at all know that he was right in coming to put all this trouble on you. Perhaps he would not have been so quick if it had been his own sister or his own daughter—”

Then a strange thing occurred. She had flung herself down on the pillow again, her face buried, her whole frame shaken by the sudden violence of her crying.

“ Don’t—don’t—don’t ! ” she sobbed, piteously. “ Don’t speak like that, papa ! There is enough trouble—there is enough.”

“ What is it, Yolande ? ” said he. “ Well, no wonder your nerves have been upset. I wonder you have taken it so bravely. I will leave you now, Yolande ; but you must try and come down to dinner.”

Dinner was put on the table ; but she did not make her appearance. A message was sent up to her ; the answer was that she merely wished to have a cup of tea by and by. Jane, on being questioned, said that everything had been got ready for their departure the following morning, even to the ordering of the dog-cart for a particular hour.

“ Yes,” her father said to John Shortlands, as they sat rather silently at the dinner table, “ she seems bent on going at once. Perhaps it is because she is nervous and anxious, and wants to know the worst. She won’t have any one with her ; she is determined to keep to Melville’s plan, though I wanted her to wait and go south with you. What a dreadful thing it would be if any harm were to befall her—”

“ Why, what harm can befall her ? ” his friend said. “ What is a journey to London ?—nothing ! She gets into the train at Inverness to-morrow at mid-day ; the next morning she is in London. Then a cab takes her to the hotel : what more simple ? The real risk begins after that ; and it is then that your friend Melville insists that she should take the thing into her own hands. Well, dang me if I’m afraid of the consequences ! There’s good grit in her. She hasn’t had her nerves destroyed, as you have. When the cob was scampering all over the place yesterday, and the groom couldn’t get hold of him, did she run into the house ? Not much. She waylaid him at the end of the bothy, and got hold of him herself, and led him to the stable door. I don’t think the lass has a bad temper, but I shouldn’t like to be the one to put a finger on her against

her will. Don't you fear. I can see where the bit of trouble, if there is to be any at all, will most likely come in; and I am not afraid. It's wonderful what women will do—ay, and weak women too—in defense of those who have a claim on their affection. Talk about the tigress and her young: a woman's twice as bad, or twice as good, if you take it that way. I fancy some o' those poor devils of School Board inspectors must have a baddish time of it occasionally—I don't envy them. I tell you you needn't be afraid, my good fellow. Yolande will be able to take care of herself. And I think Jack Melville has put her on to doing the right thing, whatever comes of it."

Yolande did not appear that night; she was too much distracted by her own thoughts; she did not wish to be confronted with questioning eyes. But she found time to write this brief note:

"Tuesday night.

"DEAR MR. SHORTLANDS,—As it is not likely I shall see you in the morning, for I am going away at a very early hour, I leave you this word of good-by. And please—*please* stay with papa as long as ever you conveniently can. Duncan assures me that it is now you will be beginning to have chances with the red deer.

"Yours affectionately,

"YOLANDE WINTERBOURNE."

And as to that other—the friend who was sending her forth on this mission—was she going away without one word of good-by for him? She considered that; and did not sleep much that night.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"IHR MATTEN, LEBT WOHL!"

THE pale clear glow of the dawn was telling on the higher slopes of the hills when she arose, and all the house was asleep. The heart searching of that long night had calmed her somewhat. Now she was chiefly anxious to get away; to seek forgetfulness of this sad discovery in

the immediate duty that lay before her. And if sometimes the fear was forced upon her that neither for him nor for her was forgetfulness possible, well, it was not her own share of that suffering that she regarded with dismay. Nay, did she not rather welcome that as a punishment which she deserved, as a penance which might be counted to her in the due course of years? If this passage in her life was not to be obliterated, at least, and in the meantime she would endeavor to close the chapter. She was going away from Allt-nam-Ba, and from the mistakes and miseries that had happened there. A new era in her life was opening before her; perhaps she would have less to reproach herself with in that.

In the silence of this pale clear morning she sat down and wrote still another message of farewell, the terms of which she had carefully (and not without some smitings of conscience) studied during the long wakeful hours:

“ ALLT-NAM-BA, *Wednesday morning.*

“ DEAR ARCHIE,—a grave duty calls me suddenly away to the south. No doubt you can guess what it is; and you will understand how, in the meantime at least, all our other plans and arrangements must yield to it. Probably, as I am anxious to catch the early boat at Foyers, I may not see you to say good-by; and so I send you this message

“ From your affectionate
“ YOLANDE.”

She regarded this letter with much self-humiliation. It was not frank. Perhaps she had no right to write to him so, without telling him of what had happened the day before. And yet, again, what time was there now for explanation? and perhaps, as the days and the months and the years went by, there might never be need of any explanation. Her life was to be all different now.

The household began to stir. There was a crackling of wood in the kitchen; outside, Sandy could be heard opening the doors of the coachhouse. Then Jane put in an appearance, to finally close her young mistress's portmanteaux. And then, everything having been got ready, when she went downstairs to the dining-room, she was surprised to find her father there.

“ Why did you get up so early?” said she, in protest.

“Do you think I was going to let you leave without saying good-by?” he answered. “You are looking a little better this morning, Yolande—but not well, not well. Are you sure you won’t reconsider? Will you not wait a few days, accustom yourself to think of it, and then go, if you will go, with Mr. Shortlands?”

“Oh no, that is all over, papa,” said she. “That is all settled. I am going this morning—now.”

“Now? Why now? It is only half past six!” he exclaimed.

“I wish to have enough time at Gress,” she answered, calmly, “to explain all the arrangements to Mrs. Bell.”

But he compelled her to sit down and have some breakfast, while he remained at the window, anxious, disturbed, and yet for the most part silent. There was no doubt he regarded her going with an undefined dread; but he saw that it was no use to try to dissuade her, her purpose being so obviously settled and clear. There was another thing: he showed the greatest embarrassment in talking in any way whatever about the subject. He could not bring himself to mention his wife’s name. To Yolande he had said “your poor mother”—but only once. He seemed unable to make this thing that he had hidden from her for so many years a topic of conversation.

And it was almost in silence, and with a face overshadowed with gloom, that he saw the last preparations made. He followed her out to the dog-cart. He himself would fasten the rugs round her knees, the morning being somewhat chilly. And when they drove away he stood there for a long time regarding them, until the dog-cart disappeared at the turning of the road, and Yolande was gone. This, then, was the end of that peaceful security that he had hoped to find at Allt-nam-Ba!

Yolande was not driving this morning; she had too many things to think of. But when they reached the bridge at the lower end of the loch, she told Sandy to stop, and took the reins.

“Here is a letter for Mr. Leslie,” she said. “You need not take it up to the house; put it in the letter-box at the gate.”

Then they drove on again. When they had climbed the hill she looked over to Lynn Towers, but she could not make out any one at any of the windows. There were one or two stable lads about the outhouses, but otherwise no

sign of life. She was rather glad of that. If he had waved his handkerchief to her, could she have answered that signal without further hypocrisy and shame? Little did he know what traitress was passing by. But indeed she was gradually ceasing to reproach herself in this way, for the reason that she was ceasing to think about herself at all. It was of another that she was thinking. It was his future that concerned her. tWhat would all his after-life be like? Would there be some reparation? Would time heal that as it healed all things?

When she got to Gress she saw that Mrs. Bell was in the garden behind the house, and thither she made her way. Yolande's face was pale, but her manner was quite calm and firm.

"Well, here are doings!" said the cheerful old lady. "And I was just hurrying on to get a few bit flowers for ye. 'Deed, ye're early this morning."

"It is very kind of you, Mrs. Bell; but please do not trouble. You expected me, then? Mr.—Mr. Melville told you?"

"That he did. And I'll just be delighted to be of any kind of service to ye that is possible. I'll be ready to go up to Allt-nam-Ba by mid-day; and I'm thinking I'll take one o' the young lassies wi' me, in case there's any need-cessity for a helping band. The other one will do very well to look after this place when both Mr. Melville and me are away."

"But is he going—is he going away?" said Yolande, with a sudden alarm.

"I think he is; though it's no my place to ask," said Mrs. Bell, placidly. "Last night I saw he was putting some things in order in the house. And I jalouse he stopped in the laboratory the whole night through for he never was in his bed; and this morning I caught a glint o' him going out before any o' us was up. I dare say he was off to one o' the moorland lochs to have a last day at the trout belike."

"He is not here, then?" the girl exclaimed, with dismay in her eyes. "Mrs. Bell, I must see him! Indeed, I cannot go until I have seen him."

"Wha kens where he may be now?" said the old lady, good-humoredly (for she clearly had no idea that there was anything tragic occurring around her). "There never was such a man for wandering about the country like a warlock."

Many a fright has he gi'en the shepherds, when they came upon him in the corries that no ordinary Christian ever goes near."

"But you must send for him, Mrs. Bell," said Yolande, with that forced calmness of demeanor almost breaking down. "I can not go away without bidding him good-by."

The old woman stopped arranging the flowers she had gathered.

"I canna send to search the whole country o' Inverness," she said, reflectively, "and wha kens where he may be? If he's no back by schooltime he's off for the day—ay, and without a biscuit in his pocket, I'll be warrant. But it's just possible he has only gaen doon to the burn to get a trout or two; I can send one o' the lassies to see. And though I've never kenned him to go up to the water-wheel at this time o' the morning, I canna gang wrang in making the bell ring. If you'll just hold the flowers for a minute, my dear young leddy, I'll go into the house and see what can be done."

She held the flowers mechanically; she did not look at them; her eyes were "otherwhere." But when Mrs. Bell came back she recalled herself; and with such calmness as she could command she showed the old lady all the arrangements she had made with regard to the household of Allt-nam-Ba, and gave her the lists that she had carefully drawn out. And Mrs. Bell would hear of no such thing as thanks or gratitude; she said people were well off who could be of any little service to them they liked, and intimated that she was proud to do this for the sake of the young lady who had been kind enough to take notice of her.

"And so you are going away for awhile," said the old Scotchwoman, cheerfully. "Ay, ay. But coming back soon again, I hope. Indeed, my dear young leddy, if it wasna a kind o' presumption on my part, I would say to ye, as they say in the old ballad, 'O when will ye be back again, my hinnie and my dear?' For indeed, since ye came to Allt-nam-Ba, it has just been something to gladden an auld woman's een."

"What is the ballad, Mrs. Bell?" Yolande said, quickly. She wished to evade these friendly inquiries. And already she was beginning to wonder whether she had enough strength and courage to force herself to go without seeing him and saying this last word to him.

“The ballad? Oh, that was the ballad o’ young Randal,” said Mrs. Bell, in her good-natured, garrulous way. “Maybe ye never heard that one?—

‘Young Randal was a bonnie lad when he gaed awa’,
A braw, braw lad was he when he gaed awa’.’

That is how it begins; and then they a’ come doon to see him ride off—his father, and his mother, and his two sisters; but, as ye may imagine,—

‘His bonnie cousin Jean lookit o’er the castle wa’,
And far aboon the lave let the tears doon fa’.’

Then it goes on :—

“O when will ye be back again?” sae kindly did she spier;
“O when will ye be back again, my himmie and my dear?”
“As soon as I have won enough o’ Spanish gear
To dress ye a’ in silks and lace, my dear.”

That was the way o’ those times, and mony a sair heart was the consequence. Will I tell ye the rest o’ the story?”

“Oh, yes, Mrs. Bell, if you please,” said Yolande though now she was scanning the vacant hillsides with a wistful and troubled eye. Was he not coming, then? Must she go away without that last word?

“Ye see, my young leddy, the story jumps over a good many years now, and he comes back to seek out his true-love Jean.”

“Yes, yes,” said Yolande, with more of interest, “to see whether she has been faithful to him, is it not? And of course she is. It is so easy for one to remain faithful—in a ballad, where nothing happens but the fancy of the poet. And then, if she was not faithful, who would write about her? She would be contemptible—that is all.”

“No so fast, my dear young leddy—no so fast. Just listen to the story,—

‘Young Randal was an altered man when he came hame;
A sair altered man was he when he came hame,
Wi’ a star on his breast and a Sir to his name,
And wi’ gray, gray locks Sir Randal came hame.’

‘He rode to the castle and he rispit at the ring,
And down came our lady to bid him ride in;
And round her bonnie bairnies were playin’ on the green:
‘Can this auld wife be my true-love Jean?’”

“And whatna dour au I carle is this?” quoth the dame.
 “Sae griff and sae stiff, sae feckless and sae lame?”
 Quoth he: “My bonnie leddy, were ye sweet Jeanie Graham?”
 “Indeed, good sir, ye have guessed my very name.”

“Oh, dool on the wars in the High Germanie!
 And dool on the poortith o’ our ain countrie!
 And dool on the heart that unfaithful can be!—
 For they’ve wrecked the bravest man in the whole countrie!” *

Ye see, it’s a sad story enough; but I’m no sure whether to blame the wars in the High Germanie, or the poverty o’ the old Scotch families, or the young lass changing her mind. Maybe if she had been less anxious for silks and lace, and maybe if he had been less anxious to hae a Sir to his name, he might hae bided at home, and married her, and lived happily enough. It’s the way o’ young people never to be satisfied. And here is Mr. Melville going away just when everything was ready for his taking back the land that belonged to his own people, and settling down on it as he ought.”

“Perhaps he will not go—perhaps he is not going, Mrs. Bell,” she said, in a despairing kind of way; for well she knew, if he were indeed going what was the cause.

Then she looked at her watch. Well, she had still nearly half an hour to spare, and she was determined to stay till the last minute if it were needful. But there was no figure coming along the road, no living thing visible on these vacant hillsides, nor a sign of life along the wide moorland of the valley. She was grateful for Mrs. Bell’s talking; it lessened the overstrain of the suspense somehow she had to force herself to listen in a measure. And again and again she expressed the hope that there must be a mistake, that Mr. Melville was not really going away.

“It’s not my place to ask,” the old lady said, doubtfully; “but he had a long talk when he came home yesterday wi’ the lad Dalrymple, and I jalouse it was about his being able to carry on the school by himsel’. It’s just that vexatious, my dear young leddy!—and, yet it canna be helped. I darena say a word. He’s a headstrong man, and he’s to be managed only wi’ a good deal o’ skill; and if he thought I was any kind o’ encumbrance, or expected him to do this, that, or the other, he would be off in a gliff. But the vexa-

* Probably this version of the ballad is very imperfect, as it is put down here from memory.

tiousness o't, to be sure! It was only the day before yesterday that I wrote to they lawyers again. I'm no gaun to tell ye, my young leddy, what they said about the price o' Monaglen, for it might get about, and I'm no wanting him to ken what I paid for it, if I get it. But I found I could easy buy it, and have a good nest-egg for him besides; besides my own £220 a year or thereabouts; and sae I wrote to they lawyers just asking them in a kind o' way to get me the refusal of the place for a freend o' mine. And then yesterday morning I began and argued wi' mysel'. I coveted the place, that's the truth. And says I, 'Kirsty, what's the use o' being ower-cunning? If ye want to buy Monaglen, tell them. A braw thing now, if it were to slip through your fingers, and be snappit up by somebody else: wadna ye be a disappointed woman a' the days o' your life?' And so, as second thochts are best, I just sat down and told them plump and plain that if Monaglen was to be got for that, here was a woman that would take it for that, and telled them to make the bargain, and drive a nail into it, there and then; and that a' the other things—a' the whigmaleeries they invent just to make poor folk pay money—could be settled after. And to think o' him going away the now, just when the night's post, or may be the morn's night post, is almost sure to bring me a telegram—I declare it's too provokin'!"

"But perhaps he is not going away," said Yolande, gently. And then she added, suddenly, and with her face grown a deadly white: "Mrs. Bell, that is Mr. Melville coming down the hill. I wish to speak a word or two to him by himself."

"Oh, yes, yes; why not?" said Mrs. Bell, cheerfully. "I'm just going indoors to put a bit string round the flowers for ye. And there's a wee bit basket too, ye maun take; I made few a sweets, and comfits, and such things for ye last night, that'll help to amuse ye on the journey."

She did not hear; she was regarding him as he approached. His features were as pale as her own; his lips were thin and white. When he came to her he stood before her with his eyes cast down like one guilty. The pallor of his face was frightful.

"I have come because you sent for me," he said. "But there is nothing you can say to me that I have not said to myself."

"Do you think I have come to reproach you? No. It

is I who have to bear the blame," she answered, with apparent calmness. Then she added: "I—I sent for you because I could not go away without a word of good-by."

Here she stopped, fearful that her self-possession would desert her. Her hands were tightly clinched, and unconsciously she was nervously fingering her engagement ring.

"I do not see," she said, speaking in a measured way, as if to make sure she should not break down, "why the truth should not be said between us—it is the last time. I did not know; you did not know; it was all a misfortune; but I ought to have known—I ought to have guarded myself: it is I who am to blame. Well, if I have to suffer, it is no matter; it is you that I am sorry for—"

"Yolande, I cannot have you talk like that!" he exclaimed.

"One moment," she said—and strangely enough her French accent seemed more marked in her speech, perhaps because she was not thinking of any accent. "One moment. When I am gone away, do not think that I regret having met you and known you. It has been a misfortune for you; for me, no. It has been an honor to me that you were my friend, and an education also; you have shown me what this one or that one may be in the world; I had not known it before; you made me expect better things. It was you who showed me what I should do. Do not think that I shall forget what I owe you: whatever happens, I will try to think of what you would expect from me, and that will be my ambition. I wished to say this to you before I went away," said she, and now her fingers were trembling somewhat, despite her enforced calmness. "And also that—that, if one can not retrieve the past, if one has the misfortune to bring suffering on—"

"Yolande, Yolande," said he, earnestly, and he looked up and looked into her eyes, "do not speak of it—do not think of it any more? Put it behind you. You are no longer a girl; you are a woman; you have a woman's duties before you. Whatever is past, let that be over and gone. If any one is to blame, it has not been you. Look before you; forget what is behind. Do you know that it is not a light matter you have undertaken?"

He was firmer than she was; he regarded her calmly, though still his face was of a ghastly paleness.

She hesitated for a moment or two; then she glanced around.

"I wish you to—to give me a flower," she said, "that I may take it with me."

"No," he said at once. "No. Forget everything that has happened here, except the duty you owe to others."

"That I have deserved," she said, in a low voice. "Good-by."

She held out her hand. He took it and held it; and there was a great compassion in his eyes. To her they seemed glorified eyes, the eyes of a saint, full of a sad and yearning pity.

"Yolande," said he—and the tones of his voice seemed to reach her very heart—"I have faith in you. I shall hear of you. Be worthy of yourself. Now, God bless you, and good-by!"

"*Adieu! adieu!*" she murmured; and then, white-faced and all trembling, but still dry-eyed and erect, she got through the house somehow, and out to the front, where Mrs. Bell was awaiting her by the side of the dog-cart.

When she had driven away, Mrs. Bell remained for a minute or two looking after the departing vehicle—and perhaps rather regretfully, too, for she had taken a great liking to this bright young English lady who had come into these wilds; but presently she was recalled from her reveries or regrets by the calling of Mr. Melville. She went into the house at once.

"Now, Mrs. Bell," said he (and he seemed in an unusual hurry), "do you think one of the girls could hunt out for me the waterproof coat that has the strap attached to it for slinging over the shoulders? And I suppose she could pack me some bit of cold meat, or something of the kind, and half a loaf, in a little parcel?"

"Dear me, sir, I will do that mysel'; but where are ye going, sir, if I may ask?"

The fact was that it was so unusual for Jack Melville to take any precautions of this kind—even when he was starting for a long day's fishing on some distant moorland loch—that Mrs. Bell instantly jumped to the conclusion that he was bent on some very desperate excursion.

"Where am I going?" he said. "Why, across the hills to Kingussie, to catch the night train to London."

CHAPTER XXXV.

“DIR, O STILLES THAL, GRUSS ZUM LETZTENMAL!”

THE train roared and jingled through the long black night; and always before her shut but sleepless eyes rose vision after vision of that which she was leaving forever behind—her girlhood. So quiet and beautiful, so rich in affection and kindness, that appeared to her now; she could scarce believe that it was herself she saw, in those recurrent scenes, so glad and joyous and light-hearted. That was all over. Already it seemed far away. She beheld herself walking with her father along the still valley, in the moonlight; or out on the blue waters of the loch, with the sun hot on the gunwale of the boat; or away up on the lonely hillsides, where the neighborhood of the watercourses was marked by a wandering blaze of gold—widespread masses of the yellow saxifrage; or seated at the head of the dinner table, with her friends laughing and talking; and all that life was grown distant now. She was as one expelled from paradise. And sometimes, in spite of herself, in spite of all her wise and firm resolves, her heart would utter to itself a sort of cry of despair. Why did he refuse her that bit of a flower to take away with her? It was so small a thing. And then she thought of the look in his eyes as he regarded her; of the great pity and tenderness shining there; and of the words of courage and hope that he had spoken to her as she left. Well she would show herself worthy of his faith in her. She would force away from her those idle regrets over a too-beautiful past. A new life was opening before her; she was content to accept whatever it might bring. Who could grudge to her this long, last review of the life she was leaving forever? Farewell—farewell! She was not even carrying away with her a bit of a leaf or a blossom, to awaken memories, in the after-time, of the garden in which she had so often stood in the white clear air, with the sunlight all around her. Well, it was better so. And perhaps in the new life that she was entering she would find such duties and occupations as would effectually prevent the recurrence of this long night's torture—this vision-building

out of the past, this inexplicable yearning, this vain stretching out of the hands to that she was leaving forever.

Toward morning she slept a little, but not much; however, on the first occasion of her opening her eyes, she found that the gray light of the new day was around her. For an instant a shock of fear overcame her—a sudden sense of helplessness and affliction. She was so strangely situated; she was drawing near the great, dread city; she knew not what lay before her; and she felt so much alone. Despite herself, tears began to trickle down her face, and her lips were tremulous. This new day seemed terrible, and she was helpless—and alone.

“Dear me, Miss,” said Jane, happening to wake up at this moment, “what is the matter?”

“It is nothing,” her young mistress said. “I—I have scarcely slept at all these two nights, and I feel rather weak, and—and—not very well. It is no matter.”

But the tears fell faster now, and this sense of weakness and helplessness completely overpowered her. She fairly broke down.

“I will tell you what it is,” she sobbed, in a kind of recklessness of despair. “It is that I have undertaken to do what is beyond me. I am not fit for it. They have asked too much of me. It is beyond what I can do. What can I do?—when I feel that I should be happy if I could only lie down and die, and be the cause of no more trouble to any one!”

The maid was very much startled by these words, though she little guessed the cause of them. And indeed her young mistress very speedily—and by a force of will that she did not suspect herself of possessing—put an end to this half-hysterical fit. She drew herself up erect, she dried her eyes’ and she told Jane that as soon as they got to the hotel she would go to bed for an hour or two and try to get some sleep; for that really this long fit of wakefulness had filled her head with all sorts of ridiculous fancies.

And that was the last sign of weakness. Pale her face might be, as she set about the undertaking of this duty; but she had steeled her heart. Fortunately, when they got to the hotel, and when she had had some breakfast, she was able to snatch an hour or two’s sound and refreshing sleep in the silence of her own room; and when she re-appeared even the dull-witted Jane noticed how much better and brisker she looked. Nay, there was even a kind of hope

fulness and cheerfulness in the way she set about making her preparations. And first of all she told Jane fully and frankly of the errand on which she had come to London; and this, as it turned out, was a wise thing to do; for the good Jane regarded the whole situation, and her probable share in the adventure, with a stolid self-sufficiency which was as good as any courage. Oh, she said, she was not afraid of such people! Probably she knew better how to manage them than a young lady would. They wouldn't frighten her! And she not obscurely hinted that, if there was any kind of incivility going on she was quite capable of giving as good as she got.

Yolande had resolved, among other things, that, while she would implicitly obey Mr. Melville's instructions about making that appeal to her mother entirely unaided and unaccompanied, she might also prudently follow her father's advice and get such help as was necessary, with regard to preliminary arrangements, from his solicitors, more especially as she had met one of those gentlemen two or three times, and so far was on friendly terms with him. Accordingly, one of the first things she did was to get into a cab, accompanied by her maid, and drive to the offices of Lawrence & Lang, in Lincoln's Inn Fields. She asked for Mr. Lang, and by and by was shown into that gentleman's room. He was a tall, elderly person, with white hair, a shrewd, thin face, and humorous, good-natured snile.

"Take a seat, Miss Winterbourne," said he. "Very lucky you came now. In another ten minutes I should have been off to seek you at the——Hotel, and we should have crossed each other."

"But how did you know I was at the——Hotel!" she said, with a stare of astonishment.

"Oh, we lawyers are supposed to know everything," he answered, good-naturedly. "And I may tell you that I know of the business that has brought you to London, and that we shall be most happy to give you all the assistance in our power."

"But how can you know!" the girl said, bewildered. "It was only the day before yesterday I decided to go, and it was only this morning I reached London. Did my papa write to you, then, without telling me!"

"My dear young lady, if I were to answer your questions you would no longer believe in the omniscience of lawyers," he said, with his grave smile. "No, no; you must assume

that we know everything. And let me tell you that the step you are taking, though it is a bold one, deserves to be successful; perhaps it will be successful because it is a bold one. I hope so. But you must be prepared for a shock. Your mother has been ill."

"Ah?" said Yolande, but no more. She held her hands clasped.

"I say she *has* been ill," said this elderly suave person, who seemed to regard the girl with a very kindly interest. "Now she is better. Three weeks ago my clerk found her unable to sign the receipt that he usually brings away with him; and I was about to write to your father, when I thought I would wait a day or two and see; and fortunately she got a little better. However, you must be prepared to find her looking ill; and—and—well, I was going to say she might be incapable of recognizing you; but I forgot. In the meantime we shall be pleased to be of every assistance to you in our power; in fact, we have been instructed to consider you as under our protection. I hope you find the——Hotel comfortable!"

"Oh yes—oh yes," Yolande said, absently; she was not thinking of any hotel; she was thinking in what way these people could be of help to her.

"Of course," said he, "when you go to see your mother, I could send some one with you if you wished it; or I would go with you myself, for that matter; but I understand that is not considered desirable."

"Oh no," said she; "I must go alone. I wish to see her alone."

"As for your personal safety," said he, "that need not alarm you. Your friends may be anxious about you, no doubt; but the very worst that can happen will be a little impertinence. You won't mind that I shall have a policeman in plain clothes standing by; if your maid should consider it necessary, she can easily summon him to you. She will be inside; he outside; so you have nothing to fear."

"Then you know all how it has been arranged!" she exclaimed.

"Why, yes; it is our business here to know everything," said he, laughing, "though we are not allowed sometimes to say how we came by the information. Now what else can we do for you? Let me see. If your poor mother will go with you, you might wish to take her to some quiet seaside place, perhaps, for her health?"

"Oh yes; I wish to take her away from London at once," Yolande said, eagerly.

"Well, a client of ours has just left some lodgings at Worthing—in fact, we have recommended them on one or two occasions, and we have been told that they gave satisfaction. The rooms are clean and nicely furnished, and the landlady is civil and obliging. She is a gentlewoman, in short, in reduced circumstances but not over-reaching. I think you might safely take the rooms."

"Will you give me the address, if you please?"

He wrote the address on a card and gave it to her.

"But do not trouble to write," said he; "we will do that for you, and arrange terms."

"But I must go down to see the place first," said she. "I can go there and get back in one day—to-morrow—can I not?"

"But why should you give yourself so much trouble?" he said.

"What a daughter can do for her own mother, that is not called trouble," she answered, simply. "Is Worthing a large town?"

"No; not a large town. It is one of the smaller watering-places."

"But one could hire there a pony and a pony-chaise?"

"Undoubtedly."

"And could one take the rooms and hire the pony and pony-chaise conditionally?"

"I don't quite understand you."

"Could one say, 'Yes, I shall want these most likely; but if I telegraph to you to-morrow or next day that I do not want them, then there is no bargain, and there is nothing to pay?'"

"I have no doubt they would make that arrangement with you. That would be merely reserving the refusal for you for a certain number of days."

"Two days at the most," said Yolande, who seemed to have studied this matter—even as she used to study the details of her future housekeeping at Allt-nam-Ba when she was sitting on the deck of the great steamer with the Mediterranean Sea around her.

"May I presume to ask," said he, "whether you are sufficiently supplied with money? We have no instructions from your father; but we shall be pleased if you consider us your bankers."

"I have only eight or nine pounds," said she, "in money; but also I have three blank checks which my papa signed: that is enough, is it not?"

"Well, yes, I should say that was enough," he remarked, with a perfectly subdued irony. "But those blank checks are dangerous things, if you will permit me to say so. I would strongly advise you, my dear Miss Winterbourne, to destroy them, and to send to us for such sums as you may want from time to time. That would be much the safer plan. And if there is any other particular in which we can be of the least assistance to you, you will please let us know. We can always send some one to you, and a telegram from Worthing only costs a shilling. As we have received such strict injunctions about looking after you, we must keep up our character as your guardian."

"I thought you said my papa had not sent you any instructions," Yoland exclaimed again.

"About the check, my dear young lady," said he promptly.

"Then I wish you to tell me something of those people—I wish to know who and what they are."

"I think Miss Winterbourne," said he, gravely, "that the information would not edify you much."

"But I wish to know," said she; "I wish to know the sort of people one must expect to find there."

"The facts are simple, then. He is a drunken scoundrel, to put the matter shortly. I believe he once in a fairly good position—I rather think he was called to the Bar; but he never practised. Betting on races, and drink, finished him between them. Then he tried to float a bit by marrying the proprietress of a public-house—an illiterate woman; but he drank through her money, and the public-house, and everything. Now they are supposed to let out this house in rooms; but as that would involve trouble, my own impression is they have no lodgers but your mother, and are content to live on the very ample allowance that we are instructed to pay her monthly. Well, no doubt they will be very angry if you succeed in taking away from them their source of income; and the man, if he is drunk, may be impertinent, but that is all you have to fear. I would strongly advise you to go in the evening. Then the presence of the policeman in the street will not arouse suspicion; and if there should be any trifling disturbance, it will be less likely to attract the notice of bystanders.

Might I ask—please forgive me if I am impertinent”—he said, “but I have known all about this sad story from the beginning, and I am naturally curious—may I ask whether the idea of your going to your mother, alone, and taking her away with you, alone, was a suggestion of your father’s?”

“It was not,” said she, with downcast eyes. “It was the suggestion of a friend whose acquaintanceship—whose friendship—we made in the Highlands—a Mr. Melville.”

“Ah,” said he, and he glanced at a card that was lying before him on the table. “It is bold—bold,” he added, musingly. “One thing is certain, everything else has failed. My dear young lady, I am afraid, however successful you may be, your life for some time to come will not be as happy and cheerful as one could wish for one of your age.”

“That I am not particular about,” said Yolande absently.

“However, in a matter of this kind, it is not my place to advise: I am a servant only. You are going down to Worthing to-morrow. I will give you a list of trains there and back, to save you the trouble of hunting through a timetable. You will be back in the evening. Now do you think it desirable that I should get this man whom I mean to employ in your service to hang about the neighborhood of the house to-morrow, just to get some notion of the comings and goings of the people?”

“I think it would be most desirable,” Yolande said.

“Very well; it shall be done. Let me see: this is Thursday; to-morrow you go to Worthing. Could you call here on Saturday to hear what the man has to say, or shall he wait on you at the—Hotel?”

“I would rather call here,” she said.

“Very well; and what hour would be most convenient?”

“Ten—is it too soon?”

“Not at all,” said he, jotting down a memorandum on a diary before him. “Now one thing more. Will you oblige me by burning those checks? I will write to your father, and take the responsibility.”

“If you think it right I will,” she said, “as soon as I go back to the hotel.”

“And here” he continued going to a safe and fetching out some Bank of England notes, “is £25 in £5 notes; it is not so serious a matter if one of these should go astray.

Please put these in your purse, Miss Winterbourne; and when you want any further sums you have only to write to us."

She thanked him, and rose, and bade him good-by.

"Good-by Miss Winterbourne," said he, in a very friendly way; "and please to remember that although, of course, all the resources of our firm are at your disposal as a matter of business, still I hope you may count on us for something more than that, if there is any way we can help you—I mean in a private and personal way. If any such occasion should arise, please remember that your father and I were friends together in Slagpool five and thirty years ago, and anything that I can do for his daughter will be a great pleasure to me."

As she left she thought that London did not seem to be, after all, such a terrible place to be alone in. Here was protection, guardianship, friendship, and assistance put all around her at the very outset. There were no more qualms or sinkings of the heart now. When she got outside it suddenly occurred to her that she would like to go away in search of the street in which her mother lived, and reconnoitre the house. Might there not be some chance of her coming out?—the day was fairly fine for London. And how strange to see her mother walking before her. She felt sure she should recognize her. And then—perhaps—what if one were suddenly to discard all preparations? what if she were to be quickly caught, and carried off, and transferred to the safety of the—Hotel, before any one could interfere?

But when she had ordered the cabman to drive to Oxford Circus, and got into the cab, along with Jane, she firmly put away from her all these wild possibilities. This undertaking was too serious a matter to be imperiled by any rashness. She might look at the street, at the house at the windows; but not if her mother were to come out and pass her by touching her skirt even, would she declare herself. She was determined to be worthy of the trust that had been placed in her.

At Oxford Circus they dismissed the cab, and walked some short distance until they found the place they were in search of—a dull, respectable-looking, quiet, misty little thoroughfare, lying just back from the continuous roar of Oxford Street. She passed the house once or twice, too, knowing it by its number, but there was no sign of life in

it. The small, curtained windows showed no one sitting there or looking out. She waited; went to distant points, and watched; but save for an occasional butcher's boy or postman the street remained uniformly empty. Then she remembered that it was drawing towards the afternoon, and that poor Jane was probably starving; so she called another cab, and drove to the hotel.

Next day was a busy day—after that life of quietude far away among the hills. She got to Worthing about twelve, and went straight to the lodgings that had been recommended by Mr. Lang, which she found in one of the bright and cheerful-looking terraces fronting the sea. She was much pleased with the rooms, which were on the first floor, the sitting-room opening on to a balcony prettily decorated with flowers; and she also took rather a fancy to the little old lady herself, who was at first rather anxious and nervous, but who grew more friendly under the influence of Yolande's calm and patronizing gentleness. Under the conditions mentioned to Mr. Lang she took the rooms, and gave her name and address and her father's name and address, adding, with the smallest touch of pride.

“Of course you know him by reputation.”

“Oh yes, indeed,” somewhat vaguely said this timid, pretty little old lady, who was the widow of a clergyman, and whose sole and whole notion of politics was that the Radicals and other evil-disposed persons of that kind were plotting the destruction of the Church of England, which to her meant nothing more nor less than the swallowing up of the visible universe. “He is in Parliament, is he not?”

“Yes,” said Yolande; “and some people wish he were not there. He is a little too honest and outspoken for them.”

Next she went to a livery-stable keeper, and asked about his terms for the hire of a pony and pony-carriage. These terms seemed to her reasonable but they were not; for she was judging them by the Inverness standard, whereas that standard is abnormally high, for the reason that the Inverness livery-stable keepers have demands made on them for only two or, at most, three months in the year, and are quite content, for the other nine months, to lend out their large stock of horses for nothing to any of the neighboring lairds or farmers who will take them and feed them. However, the matter was not a serious one.

The next morning she called at the office of Messrs. Lawrence & Lang, heard what the man who had been posted in that little thoroughfare had to say, and arranged that she should go alone to the house that evening at eight o'clock. She had no longer in her eyes the pretty timidity and bashfulness of a child; she bore herself with the demeanor of a woman.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

AN ABDUCTION.

A FEW minutes before eight on that evening, in the thoroughfare just mentioned, a short, thickset man was standing by a lamp-post, either trying to read, or pretending to read, an evening newspaper by the dull, yellow light. Presently a hansom cab drove up to the corner of the street and stopped there, and a taller and younger man got out and came along to the lamp-post.

"I would go a dozen yards nearer," said the new-comer.

"Very well, sir," said the other. And then he added, "The master of the house has just gone out sir."

"So much the better," said the younger man, carelessly. "There will be the less bother—probably none at all. But you keep a little bit nearer after the young lady has gone into the house."

"Very well, sir."

The new-comer apparently did not consider that any great vigilance or surveillance would be necessary, but all the same, while he still left the hansom at the corner of the street, he walked along a few yards further (glancing in passing at the windows of one of the houses), until he came to a narrow entry leading down into a courtyard, and there a step or two into the gloom of the little passage effectually hid him from sight.

Punctually at eight o'clock a four-wheeled cab appeared and drew up, and Yolande got out, followed by her maid. Without delay or hesitation she crossed the pavement and knocked at the door. A girl of about fifteen opened it.

"Is Mrs. Winterbourne within?" said Yolande, calmly. The girl eyed her doubtfully. "Y—yes, miss."

"I wish to see her, if you please."

"Y—yes, miss; if you wait for a moment I'll go and tell missis."

"No," said Yolande, promptly and she passed into the lobby without further ado—"no, I will not trouble your mistress. Please show me where I shall find Mrs. Winterbourne; that is enough."

Now the girl looked frightened, for the two strangers were inside, and she glanced behind her to see whether her mistress were not coming to her relief. Moreover, this tall young lady had an imperious way with her?

"Which is her room?"

"T—that is her sitting-room," stammered the girl. Indeed, they were all standing just outside the door of it.

"Thank you," she said, and she put her hand on the handle of the door. "Jane, wait for me." The next moment she was inside the room, and the door shut behind her.

A spasm of fear caught her and struck her motionless. Some one sat there—some one in a chair—idly looking into the fire, a newspaper flung aside. And what horror might not have to be encountered now! She had been warned; she had prepared herself; but still—

Then the next moment a great flood of pity and joy and gratitude filled her heart; for the face that was turned to her—that regarded her with a mild surprise—though it was emaciated and pallid, was not unlovable; and the eyes were large and strange and melancholy. This poor lady rose, and with a gentle courtesy regarded her visitor, and said, —

"I beg your pardon; I did not hear you come into the room."

What a strange voice—hollow and distant; and it was clear that she was looking at this new-comer only with a vague, half-pleased curiosity, not with any natural wonder at such an intrusion. Yolande could not speak. She forgot all that she had meant to say. Her heart seemed to be choking her.

"Mother," she managed to say at length, "you do not know, then, that I am your daughter."

"My Yolande!" she said—and she retreated a step, as if in fear. "You are not my Yolande—you!"

She regarded her apparently with some strange kind of

dread—as if she were an apparition. There was no wonder, or joy, or sudden impulse of affection.

“You—you cannot be my Yolande—my daughter!”

“But indeed I am, mother,” said the girl, with the tears running down her face in spite of herself. “Ah! it is cruel that I should come to you as a stranger—that you should have no word of kindness for me. But no matter. We shall soon make up for all these years. Mother, I have come to take you away. You must no longer be here alone. You will come with me, will you not!”

The pale, emaciated, hollow-voiced woman came nearer now, and took Yolande’s hand and, regarded her with a kind of vague, pleased curiosity and kindness.

“And you are really my Yolande, then? How tall you are! and beautiful too—like an angel. When I have thought of you it was not like this. What beautiful beautiful hair! and so straight you have grown, and tall! So they have sent you to me at last. But it is too late now—too late.”

“No, no, mother it is not too late. You will come away with me, will you not—now—at once?”

The other shook her head sadly; and yet it was obvious that she was taking more and more interest in her daughter—regarding her from top to toe, admiring her dress even, and all the time holding her hand.

“Oh no, I cannot go away with you,” she said. “It is not for you to be hampered with one like me. I am content. I am at peace here. I am quite happy here. You are young, rich, beautiful; you will have a beautiful life; everything beautiful round you. It is so strange to look at you! And who sent you? The lawyers, I suppose. What do they want now? Why do they not let me alone?”

She let the girl’s hand fall, and turned away dejectedly, and sank down into the easy-chair again with a sigh. But Yolande was mistress of herself now. She went forward, put her hand upon her mother’s shoulder, and said, firmly:

“Mother, I will not allow you to remain here. It is not a fit place for you. I have come to take you away myself; the lawyers have not sent me; they want nothing. Dear mother, do make up your mind to come away with me—now!”

Her entreaty was urgent, for she could hear distinctly that there were some “high words” being bandied in the

lobby, and she wished to get her mother away without any unseemly squabble.

“Do, mother! Everything is ready. You and I will go away together to Worthing, and the sea air and the country drives will soon make you well again. I have got everything prepared for you—pretty rooms fronting the sea; and a balcony where you can sit and read; and I have a pony-carriage to take you for drives through the lanes. Ah! now, to think it is your own daughter who is asking you! You cannot refuse! You cannot refuse!”

She had risen again and taken Yolande’s hand, but her look was hesitating, and bewildered.

“They will be angry,” said she, timidly; for now the dissension without was clearly audible.

“Who, then?” said Yolande, proudly. “You will leave them to me, mother; I am not afraid. Ah if you saw how much prettier the rooms are at Worthing!—yes; and no longer you will have to sit alone by yourself in the evening. Come, mother!”

At this moment the door opened, and a short, stout, red-faced black-haired woman made her appearance. It was clear that the altercation with Jane had not improved her temper.

“I beg your pardon young lady,” said she, with studied deference, “but I want to know what this means.”

Yolande turned with flashing eyes.

“Leave the room!”

For a second the woman was cowed by her manner; but the next moment she had bridled up again.

“Leave the room, indeed! Leave the room—in my own house! Not until I’m paid. And what’s more, the poor dear lady isn’t going to be taken away against her will. She knows who her friends are. She knows who have looked after her and nursed her. She sha’n’t be forced away from the house against her will, I warrant you.”

“Leave the room this instant, or I will send for a policeman!” Yolande said; and she had drawn herself up to her full height, for her mother, poor creature, was timidly shrinking behind her.

“A policeman! Hoity-toity!” said the other, with her little black eyes sparkling. “You’d better have no policeman in here. It’s not them that are robbing a poor woman that should call for a policeman. But you haven’t taken her with you yet, and what’s more, she sha’n’t move an inch out of this house until every farthing that’s owing to us is

paid—that she sha'n't. We're not going to be robbed so long as there's the law. Not till every farthing is paid, I warrant you!—so perhaps you'll let the poor dear lady alone, and leave her in the care of them that she knows to be her friends. A policeman, indeed! Not one step shall she budge until every farthing of her debt is paid.”

Now for the moment Yolande was completely disconcerted. It was a point she had not foreseen; it was a point, therefore, on which she had asked no counsel. She had been assured by Mr. Lang that she had nothing to fear in talking away her mother from this house—that she was acting strictly within her legal rights. But how about this question of debt? Could they really detain her? Outwardly, however, she showed no symptom of this sudden doubt. She said to the woman, with perfect calmness,—

“Your impertinence will be of little use to you. My mother is going with me; I am her guardian. If you interfere with me, it will be at your own peril. If my mother owes you anything, it will be paid.”

“How am I to know that? Here she is, and here she shall remain until every farthing is paid. We are not going to be robbed in that way.”

“I tell you that whatever is owing to you will be paid,” said Yolande. “You need not pretend that you have any fear of being robbed; you know you will be paid. And now I wish you to tell me where my mother's things are. Which is her bedroom?”

“I'll show you whether you can ride the high horse over me!” said the woman, with her eyes glittering with anger. “I'll go and fetch my husband, that I will.” And the next second she had left the room and the house too, running out into the night bareheaded.

“Now, mother,” said Yolande, quickly, “now is our chance! Where are your things? Oh, you must not think of packing anything; we will send for what you want to-morrow. But do you really owe these people anything?”

“I don't know,” said her mother, who seemed to have been terrified by this threat on the part of the woman.

“Well, then, where is your hat?—where is your shawl? Where is your room?”

Almost mechanically she opened the folding-doors that formed one side of the apartment, disclosing beyond a bedroom. Yolande preceded her, picking up the things she wanted and helped her to put them on.

"Come, now, mother; we will get away before they come back. Oh you need not be afraid. Everything is arranged for you. There is a cab waiting for us outside."

"Who is in it?" said the mother, drawing back with a gesture of fear.

"Why, no one at all," said Yolande, cheerfully. "But my maid is just outside, in the passage. Come along, mother."

"Where are we going?"

"To the hotel where I am staying, to be sure. Everything is arranged for you; we are to have supper together—you and I—all by ourselves. Will that please you, mother?"

"Wait for a moment, then."

She went back into the bedroom, and almost instantly re-appeared, glancing at Yolande with a quick, furtive look that the girl did not understand. She understood after.

"Come then."

She took her mother by the hand and led her as if she was a child. In the lobby they encountered Jane, and Jane was angry.

"Another minute, miss, and I would have turned her out by the shoulders," she said, savagely.

"Oh, it is all right," said Yolande, briskly. "Everything is quite right. Open the door Jane there's a good girl."

They had got out from the house, and were indeed crossing the pavement, when the landlady again made her appearance, coming hurriedly up in the company of a man who looked like (what he was) a butler out of employment, and who was obviously drunk. He began to hector and bully. He interposed himself between them and the cab.

"You ain't going away like this. You ain't going to rob poor people like this! You come back into the house until we settle this affair."

Now Yolande's only aim was to get clear of the man and to get her mother put into the cab; but he stood in front of her, whichever way she made the attempt; and at last he put his hands on her arm to force her back to the house. It was an unfortunate thing for him that he did so. There was a sudden crash; the man reeled back, staggered, and then fell like a log on the pavement; and Yolande, bewildered by the instantaneous nature of the whole occurrence, only knew that something like a black shadow had

gone swiftly by. All this appeared to have happened in a moment, and in that same moment here was the policeman in plain clothes, whom she knew by sight.

“What a shame to strike the poor man!” said he to the landlady, who was on her knees shrieking by the side of her husband. “But he ain’t much hurt, mum. I’ll help him indoors, mum. I’m a constable, I am. I wish I knew who done that; I’d have the law again him.”

As he uttered these words of consolation he regarded the prostrate man with perfect equanimity, and a glance over his shoulder informed him that in the confusion Yolande, and her mother, and the maid, had got into the cab and driven off. Then he proceeded to raise the stupefied ex-butler, who certainly had received a “facer,” but who presently came to himself as near as the fumes of rum would allow. Nay, he helped, or rather steadied, the man into the house, and assured the excited landlady that the law would find out who had committed this outrage; but he refused the offer of a glass of something on the plea that he was on duty. Then he took down the number of the house in his note-book, and left.

As he walked along the street he was suddenly accosted by the tall, broad-shouldered young man who had disappeared into the narrow entry.

“Why weren’t you up in time!” said the latter, angrily.

“Lor, sir, you was so quick!”

“Is that drunken idiot hurt?”

“Well, sir, he may ’ave a black eye in the morning—maybe a pair on ’em. But ’tain’t no matter. He’ll think he run agin a lamp-post. He’s as drunk as drunk.”

“What was the row about? I couldn’t hear a word.”

“Why, sir, they said as the lady owed them something.”

“Oh, that was the dodge. However, it’s all settled now—very well settled. Let me see, I suppose Lawrence & Lang pay you?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Well, you know, I don’t think you did your best. You weren’t sharp enough. When you saw that drunken brute seize hold of the young lady’s arm you should have been there—on the spot—on the instant—”

“Lor, sir, you was so quick! And the man went over like a ninepin.”

“Well, the affair is satisfactory as it stands,” said the younger and taller man, “and I am well satisfied, and so I

suppose you don't mind my adding a sovereign to what Lawrence & Lang will give you."

"Thank ye, sir," said the man, touching his cap.

"Here you are then. Good-night."

"Good-night, sir."

Then the younger man walked on to the corner of the street, jumped into the hansom that was still awaiting him there, called through the trap-door to the driver. "United Universities, corner of Suffolk Street, Pall Mall," and so was driven off.

That same night Yolande wrote the following letter to her father:—

"MY DEAR PAPA,—I wish that I might write this letter in French, for my heart is so full; but I know you would not like it, so I will do my best in English. It is all over and settled; my mother is with me—in this room where I am writing—reading a little, but not so agitated by the events of the day, or rather this evening, that one might expect. It is I who am agitated: please forgive my errors. But, oh, it was the saddest thing ever seen in the world, for a mother to be standing opposite her own daughter, and not caring for her—not knowing her. We were two strangers. But my heart was glad. I had had the apprehension that I should have to overcome emotions: that it might be only duty that would keep me by her side; but no, no. When I saw her face, and her gentle eyes, I said to myself how easy would be the task of loving her as a daughter should. Dear Papa, she is so ill; and also she seems so far away and absorbed and sad. She is only a little interested in me—only a little. But yet I think she is pleased. I have shown her what wardrobe I have with me, and that pleased her a little; but it is I who will have to be the guardian, and buy things for her. She was pleased with my dressing-bag, and to-morrow I am going to buy her the most beautiful one I can get in London. Mr. Lang asked me to burn the three blank checks you gave me, and I did that, and I am to have money from him; but after the dressing-bag I hope there will not be much expense; for we shall be living quietly at Worthing; and I know that when you gave Mrs. Graham the expensive piece of broderie at Cairo you will not grudge me that I give my mother a beautiful dressing-bag

"It has all happened just as Mr. Melville planned. How he could have foreseen so much I cannot tell; perhaps it is

that I followed to his instructions as nearly as I could. The people were insolent somewhat; but to me, not to my mother; so that is right. But at the end, when we were coming away, the man seized me, and then I was frightened—he wished me to go back into the house—and then, I know not how, he was struck and fell; perhaps by the policeman it was, but I did not stay to look. I hurried my mother into the cab, and we are here safe and sound. Poor Jane is so angry. She demands to go back to-morrow to recover some things of my mother's and also that she wants to "have it out" with the woman because of the way she spoke to me; but this I will not allow. I shall write to Messrs. Lawrence & Lang to-night to send some one; also to pay what ever is owing.

"She has just come over and stroked my hair, and gone back to her chair again; I think she is a little more affectionate to me now; and oh! I am so anxious to get away to the sea-air, that it may wake her out of this lethargy. I know it will, I am sure of it. We have got such cheerful rooms! The address, dear papa, is Arbutus Villa, —Terrace, Worthing; please give it to Duncan, and tell him to send me each week a brace of grouse, a brace of black game, one or two hares, and any odd ptarmigan or snipe you may get; then I will know that they are good. To-night we had supper together; alas! she ate scarcely anything. I asked if she would have a little wine—no; she seemed to have a horror of it; even to be frightened. She came round the table and took me by the hand, and begged of me to be always with her. I said, was not that what I had come for? She said, with such a strange voice, "I need help—I need help"; and I answered that now everything was to be reversed, and that I was to be the mother to her, and to take charge of her. Then she cried a little; but I think she was pleased with me; and when I said that I wanted to write a letter, after we had finished, she said she would read until I had written the letter, and then she wished to hear where I had been, and how I had lived in the Highlands. Perhaps in time I will persuade her to be affectionate to me; on my part it will not be difficult that I should soon love her, for she is gentle, and to regard her fills one's heart with pity. I had great terror that it might not be so.

"To-morrow, if it is possible, I think we will get away to Worthing. I am anxious to begin my guardianship.

Perhaps by a middle day train, if I have to buy some things for my mother. Or why not there, we shall have plenty of time? I wish to see her away from the town—in clear, brisk air; then we shall have the long, quiet, beautiful days to become acquainted with each other. It is so strange, is it not, a mother and daughter becoming acquainted with each other? But, since I am her guardian, I must not let her sit up too late; and so good-night, dear, dear papa, from your affectionate daughter,
 “YOLANDE.”

That was naturally the end of the letter, and yet she held it open before her for some time in hesitation. And then she took her pen and added: “I cannot tell you how glad it would make me if you had time to write a long letter to me about Allt-nam-Ba, and all the people there; for one cannot help looking back to the place where one has been happy.”

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A BEGINNING.

DESPITE all her hurrying, however, Yolande did not manage to get away from London on the day following; it was not until early the next morning that she and her mother and the maid found themselves finally in the train, and the great city left behind for good. The weather was brilliant and shining around them; and the autumn-tinted woods were glorious in color. To these, or any other passing object, Yolande, in her capacity of guardian, drew cheerful attention, treating the journey, indeed, as a very ordinary every-day affair; but the sad-eyed mother seemed hardly capable of regarding anything but her daughter, and that sometimes with a little bit of stealthy crying.

“Ah,” she said, in those strangely hollow tones, “it is kind of you to come and let me see you for a little while.”

“A little while? What little while, then?” said Yolande, with a stare.

“Until I go back.”

“Until you go back where, mother?”

"Anywhere—away from you," said the mother, regarding the girl with an affectionate and yet wistful look. "It was in a dream that I came away from the house with you. You seemed calling me in a dream. But now I am beginning to wake. At the station there were two ladies; I saw them looking at us; and I knew what they were thinking. They were wondering to see a beautiful young life like yours linked to a life like mine; and they were right. I could see it in their eyes."

"They would have been better employed in minding their own business," said Yolande, angrily.

"No; they were right," said her mother, calmly; and then she added, with a curious sort of smile: "But I am going to be with you for a little while. I am not going away yet. I want to learn all about you, and understand you; then I shall know what to think when I hear of you afterward. You will have a happy life; I shall hear of you perhaps, and be proud and glad; I shall think of you always as young and happy and beautiful; and when you go back to your friends—"

"Dear mother," said Yolande, "I wish you would not talk nonsense. When I go back to my friends! I am not going back to any friends until you go back with me: do you understand that?"

"I?" said she; and for a second there was a look of fright on her face. Then she shook her head sadly. "No, no. My life is wrecked and done for; yours is all before you—without a cloud, without a shadow. As for me, I am content. I will stay with you a little while, and get to know you; then I will go away. How could I live if I knew that I was the shadow on your life?"

"Well, yes, mother, you have got a good deal to learn about me," said Yolande, serenely. "It is very clear that you don't know what a temper I have, or you would not be so anxious to provoke me to anger. But please remember that it isn't what you want, or what you intend to do—it is what I may be disposed to allow you to do. I have been spoiled all my life; that is one thing you will have to learn about me. I always have my own way. You will find that out very soon; and then you will give over making foolish plans; or thinking that it is for you to decide. Do you think I have stolen you away, and carried you into slavery, to let you do as you please? Not at all; it is far from that. As soon as we get to Worthing I am going to

get a prettier bonnet than that—I know the shop perfectly ; I saw it the other day. But do you think I will permit you to choose the color? No, not at all—not at all. And as for your going away, or going back, or going anywhere—oh we will see about that, I assure you.”

For the time being, at all events, the mother did not protest. She seemed more and more fascinated by the society of her daughter ; and appeared quite absorbed in regarding the bright young fresh face, and in listening with a strange curiosity for the slight traces of a foreign accent that remained in Yolande’s talking. As for the girl herself she bore herself in the most matter of fact way. She would have no sentiment interfere. And always it was assumed that her mother was merely an invalid whom the sea air would restore to health ; not a word was said as to the cause of her present condition.

Worthing looked bright and cheerful on this breezy forenoon. The wind-swept yellow-gray sea was struck a gleaming silver here or there with floods of sunlight ; the morning promenaders had not yet gone in to lunch ; a band was playing at the end of the pier. When they got to the rooms, they found that every preparation had been made to receive them ; and in the bay-window they discovered a large telescope which the little old lady said she had borrowed from a neighbor whose rooms were unlet. Yolande managed everything—Jane being a helpless kind of creature—and the mother submitted occasionally with a touch of amusement appearing in her manner. But usually she was rather sad, and her eyes had an absent look in them.

“ Now let me see,” said Yolande, briskly, as they sat at lunch (Jane waiting on them). “ There is really so much to be done that I don’t know where we should begin. Oh yes, I do. First we will walk along to the shops and buy your bonnet. Then to a chemist’s for some scent for your dressing-bags. Then we must get glass dishes for flowers for the table—one round one for the middle, and two semicircles. Then when we come back the pony-carriage must be waiting for us ; and we will give you a few minutes to put on the bonnet, dear mother ; and then we will go away for a drive into the country. Perhaps we shall get some wild flowers ; if not then we will buy some when we come back—”

“ Why should you give yourself so much trouble, Yolande ? ” her mother said.

“Trouble? It is no trouble. It is an amusement—an occupation. Without an occupation how can one live?”

“Ah, you are so full of life—so full of life,” the mother said, regarding her wistfully.

“Oh, I assure you,” said Yolande, blithely “that not many know what can be made of wild flowers in a room—if you have plenty of them. Not all mixed; but here one mass of color; and there another. Imagine, now that we were thirty-three miles from Inverness; how could one get flowers except by going up the hill-side and collecting them? That was an occupation that had a little trouble, to be sure!—it was harder work than going to buy a bonnet! But sometimes we were not quite dependent on the wild flowers; there was a dear good woman living a few miles away—ah, she was a good friend to me!—who used to send me from her garden far more than was right. And every time that I passed, another handful of flowers; more than that, perhaps some fresh vegetables all nicely packed up; perhaps a little basket of new-laid eggs; perhaps a pair of ducklings—oh, such kindness as was quite ridiculous from a stranger. And then when I come away, she goes to the lodge, and takes one of the girls with her, to see that all is right; and no question of trouble or inconvenience; you would think it was you who were making the obligation and giving kindness, not taking it. I must write to her when I have time. But I hope soon to hear how they are all going on up there in the Highlands.”

“Dear Yolande,” said the mother. “why should you occupy yourself about me? Do your writing; I am content to sit in the same room. Indeed, I would rather listen to you talking about the Highlands than go out to get the bonnet, or anything else.”

“Why do I occupy myself about you?” said Yolande. “Because I have brought you here to make you well; that is why. And you must be as much as possible out-of-doors, especially on such a day as this, when the air is from the sea. Ah, we shall soon make you forget the London dizziness and the smoke. And you would rather not go for a drive, perhaps, when it is I who am going to drive you?”

Indeed, she took the mastership into her own hand; and perhaps that was a fortunate necessity; for it prevented her thinking over certain things that had happened to herself. Wise, grave-eyed, thoughtful, and prudent, there was now little left in her manner or speech of the petulant and

light-hearted Yolande of other days ; and yes she was pleased to see that her mother was taking more and more interest in her : and perhaps sometimes—though she strove to forget the past altogether and only to keep herself busily occupied with the present—there was some vague and subtle sense of self-approval. Or was it self-approval? Was it not rather some dim kind of belief that if he who had appealed to her, if he who had said that he had faith in her, could now see her, he would say that she was doing well? But she tried to put these remembrances away.

An odd thing happened when they were out. They had gone to the shop where Yolande had seen the bonnets ; and she was so satisfied with the one that she chose that she made her mother put it on then and there, and asked the milliner to send the other home. Then they went outside again ; and not far off was a chemist's shop.

" Now," said Yolande, " we will go and choose two scents for the bottles in the dressing-bags. One shall be white rose ; and the other ? What other ? "

" Whichever you like best, Yolande," said her mother, submissively, her daughter had become so completely her guide and guardian.

" But it is for your dressing-bag mother, not mine," said Yolande. " You must choose. You must come into the shop and choose."

" Very well, then."

They walked to the shop ; and Yolande glanced for a minute at the window, and then went inside. But the moment they had got within the door—perhaps it was the odor of the place that had recalled her to herself—the mother shrank back with a strange look of fear on her face.

" Yolande," she said, in a low, hurried voice, " I will wait for you outside."

" But which is to be the other scent mother ? "

" I will wait for you outside," said she with her hand touching her daughter's arm. " I will wait for you outside."

Then Yolande seemed to comprehend what that dazed look of fear meant ; and she was so startled that, even after her mother had left, she could scarce summon back enough self-possession to tell the shopman what she wanted. Thereafter she never asked her mother to go near a chemist's shop.

That same afternoon they went for a drive along some

of the inland country lanes ; and as they soon found that the stolid, fat, and placid pony could safely be left under the charge of Jane, they got out whenever they had a mind, to look at an old church, or to explore banks and hedgerows in search of wild flowers. Now this idle strolling, with occasional scrambling across ditches, was light enough work for one who was accustomed to climb the hills of Allt-nam-Ba; but no doubt it was fatiguing enough to this poor woman, who, nevertheless, did her best to prove herself a cheerful companion. But it was on this fatigue that Yolande reckoned. That was why she wanted her mother to be out all day in the sea air and the country air. What she was aiming at was a certainty of sleep for this invalid of whom she was in charge. And so she cheered her on to further exertion ; and pretended an eagerness in this search for wild flowers which was not very real (for ever, in the midst of it, some stray plants here or there would remind her of a herbarium far away, and of other days and other scenes), until at last she thought they had both done their duty, and so they got into the little carriage again and drove back to Worthing.

That evening at dinner she amused her mother with a long and minute account of the voyage to Egypt, and of the friends who had gone with them, and of the life on board the dahabeeyah. The mother seemed peculiarly interested about Mr. Leslie, and asked many questions about him ; and Yolande told her frankly how pleasant and agreeable a young fellow he was, and how well he and his sister seemed to understand each other, and so forth. She betrayed no embarrassment in expressing her liking for him ; although, in truth, she spoke in pretty much the same terms of Colonel Graham."

"Mr. Leslie was not married, then?"

"Oh, no."

"It was rather a dangerous position for two young people," the mother said, with a gentle smile. "It is a wonder you are not wearing a ring now."

"What ring?" Yolande said, with a quick flush of color.

"An engagement ring."

In fact, the girl was not wearing her engagement ring. On coming to London she had taken it off and put it away ; other duties claimed her now—that was what she said to

herself. And now she was content that her mother should remain in ignorance of that portion of her past story.

"I have other things to attend to," she said, briefly; and the subject was not continued.

That day passed very successfully. The mother had shown not the slightest symptom of any craving for either stimulant or narcotic; nor any growing depression in consequence of being deprived of these—though Jack Melville had warned Yolande that both were probable. No; the languor from which she suffered appeared to be merely the languor of ill health; and, so far from becoming more depressed, she had become rather more cheerful, especially when they were wandering along the lanes in search of wild flowers. Moreover, when she went to bed (she and Yolande occupied a large double-bedded room) she very speedily fell into a sound, quiet sleep. Yolande lay awake watching her, but everything seemed right; and so by-and-by the girl's mind began to wander away to distant scenes and to pictures that she had been trying to banish from her eyes.

And if sometimes in this hushed room she cried silently to herself, and hid her face in the pillow so that no sob should awaken the sleeping mother, well, perhaps that was only a natural reaction. The strain of all that forced cheerfulness had been terrible. Once or twice during the evening she had had to speak of the Highlands; and the effort on such occasions to shut out certain recollections and vain regrets and self-abasements was of itself a hard thing. And now that the strain was over, her imagination ran riot; all the old life up there, with its wonder and delight and its unknown pitfalls, came back to her; and all through it she seemed to hear a sad refrain—a couple of lines from one of Mrs. Bell's ballads—that she could not get out of her head.

"Quoth he, 'My bonnie leddy, were ye sweet Jeanie Graham?'
'Indeed, guid sir, but ye've guessed my very name.'"

They could not apply to her; but somehow there was sorrow in them; and a meeting after many years; and the tragedy of two changed lives. How could they apply to her? If there was any one of whom she was thinking it ought to have been he to whom she had plighted her troth. She had put aside her engagement ring for a season; but

she was not thereby absolved from her promise. And yet it was not of him she was thinking; it was of some one she saw only vaguely, but gray-haired and after many years, coming back to a wrecked existence; and her heart, that had a great yearning and pity and love in it, knew that it could not help, and what was there but woman's tears and a life-long regret? That was a sad night. It was not the mother, it was the daughter, who passed the long sleepless hours in suffering. But with the morning Yolande had pulled herself together again. She was only a little pale—that was all. She was as cheerful, as brave, as high-spirited as ever. When did the band play?—they would walk out on the pier. But even Jane could see that this was not the Yolande who had lived at Allt-nam-Ba with a kind of sunlight always on her face; and she wondered.

Not that day but the next came the anxiously expected news from the Highlands.

“MY DARLING YOLANDE,—Your letter has given me inexpressible relief. I was so loath to see you go. Above all, it seemed so cruel that you should go alone, and I remain here. But probably Mr. Melville was right; perhaps it may all turn out for the best; but it will be a long time before any one can say so; and as I think of you in the meantime, it is with no great sense of satisfaction that I am conscious that I can do nothing to help you. But I rejoice that so far you have had no serious trouble; perhaps the worst is over; if that *were* so, then there might be a recompense to you for what you must be undergoing. It would be strange indeed if this should succeed after so many failures. It would make a great difference to all our lives; sometimes I begin to think it possible, and then recollections of the past prove too strong. Let me know your opinion. Tell me everything. Even after all these years, sometimes I begin to hope and to think of our having a home and a household after all.

“There is but little news to send you. At the moment I am quite alone. Mr. Shortlands has changed all his plans, and has gone south for a few days, finding that he can come back and remain with me until the 15th of October. Then you must tell me what you would have me do. Perhaps you will know better by that time. If you think the experiment hopeless, I trust you will have the honesty

to say so; then I will take you for a run abroad somewhere, after your long waiting and nursing.

* “The Master is in Inverness, I hear; probably it is business that detains him: otherwise I should have been glad of his company on the hill, now that Shortlands is away. But the shooting has lost all interest for me. When I come back in the evening there is no one standing at the door, and no one to sit at the head of the dinner table. I shall be glad when the 15th of October comes; and then, if there is no prospect of your present undertaking proving successful, you and I will preen our feathers for the South. If they are going to bury you alive in these wilds subsequently, you and I must have at least one last swallow flight. Not the Riviera this time; the Riviera is getting to be a combination of Bond Street and Piccadilly. Athens—what do you say? I remember the Grahams talking vaguely about their perhaps trying to spend a winter in Algiers, and pleasanter travelling companions you could not find anywhere; but even if we have to go alone we shall not grumble much?”

“This reminds me that one part of your letter made me very angry—I mean about the expense of the dressing-bag, and your proposed economy at Worthing. I suppose it was those people at the Chateau that put those ideas into your head; but I wish you to understand that there is nothing so stupid as unnecessary economy for economy’s sake, and that when I wish you to begin cheese-paring I will tell you so. Extravagance is silly—and ill-bred too; but there is some such thing as knowing what one can fairly spend in proportion to one’s income; and when I wish you to be more moderate in your expenditure I will tell you. And, indeed, it is not at such a time that you should think of expense at all. If this experiment is likely to end as we wish, then we shall not be considering a few pounds or so.

“I think you will be pleased to hear that Mrs. Bell does not manage one whit better than you—how could she, when everything was perfect? But the situation is awkward. I imagined she was only coming here for a day or two—to set things going, as it were, under a new *regime*; but the good woman shows no signs of departure; and indeed she manages everything with such tact and good sense, and with such an honest, frank recognition of the facts of the case, that I am really afraid to hurt her and offend her by suggesting that she should not waste so much of her time up here. It was all very well with Mr. Melville—he was her hero, the

master of the house, the representative of the family that she looked up to; but it is different with me; and yet there is a kind of self-respect in the way in which she strictly keeps to her 'station,' that one does not like to interfere. I have thought of pointing out to her that my last house-keeper was a person called Yolande Winterbourne, and that she was in no wise so respectful in her manner: but then I thought it better to let the good woman have her own way; and with all her respectfulness there is, as you know, a frank and honest friendliness which tells you that she quite understands her own value in the world. She has, however, been so communicative as to unfold to me her great project of the buying back of Monaglen; and I must say it seems very ill-advised of Mr. Melville, just when this project is about to be accomplished, to disappear and leave not even his address behind. All that Mrs. Bell knows is that, on the morning you left, he announced his intention of crossing over the hills to Kingussie to catch the night train going south; and Duncan says he saw him going up by the Corrie-an-eich. You know what an undertaking that is, and the stories they tell about people having been lost in these solitudes; but, as Duncan says, there was not any one in the country who could cross the hills with less chance of coming to harm than Mr. Melville. Still, he might have left the good woman his address; and she, it seems, did not consider it her 'place' to ask."

At this point Yolande stopped—her brain bewildered, her heart beating wildly. If he had crossed over the hills to catch the night train to the south, why, that was the train in which she also was travelling from Inverness to London! Had he been in that same train, then—separated from her by a few carriages only—during the long darkness in which she seemed to be leaving behind her youth and hope and almost the common desire of life? And why? He had spoken to no one of his going away. Mrs. Bell had guessed that he might be going, from his preparations of the previous evening: but to leave on that very morning—to catch the very train in which she was seated—perhaps to come all the way to London with her: here was food for speculation and wonder. Of course it never occurred to her that he might have come to any harm in crossing the hills; she did not even think of that. He was as familiar with these corries and slopes and streams as with the door-step of the house at Gress. No; he had waited for the train to come along; perhaps she did not even look out from the window when they

reached the station ; he would get into one of the carriages ; and all through the long afternoon and evening, and on and through the blackness of the night, and in the gray of the morning, he was there. And perhaps at Euston Square too ? He might easily escape her notice in the crowd if he wished to do so. Would he disappear into the wilderness of London ? But he knew the name of the hotel she was going to—that had all been arranged between them ; might he not by accident have passed along Albemarle Street on one or other of those days ? Ah, if she had chanced to see him !—would not London have seemed less lonely ? would she not have consoled herself with the fancy that somewhere or other there was one watching over her and guarding her ? A dream—a dream. If he were indeed there, he had avoided meeting her. He had gone away. He had disappeared—into the unknown ; and perhaps the next she should hear of him might be after many years, as of a gray-haired man going back to the place that once knew him, with perhaps some vague question on his lips—

“ My bonnie laddy, were ye sweet Jeanie Graham ? ”

though to whom he might address that question she scarcely dared to ask or think.

She only looked over the remainder of the letter ; her hurried fancies were wandering far away.

“ So you see I have no news ; although in my solitude this gossip seems to unite you with me for a time. The only extraordinary thing that I have seen or met with since you left, we ran across the other night on coming home from the shooting. We had been to the far tops after ptarmigan and white hares, and got belated. Long before we reached home complete darkness overtook us ; a darkness so complete that, although we walked Indian file, Duncan leading, I could not see Shortlands, who was just in front of me ; I had to follow him by sound, sliding down among loose stones or jumping into peat-hags in a very happy-go-lucky fashion. Crossing the Allt-crom by the little swinging bridge you know of, was also a pleasant performance, for there had been rain, and the waters were much swollen, and made a terrible noise in the dark. However, it was when we were over the bridge and making for the lodge that I noticed the phenomenon I am going to tell you about

I was trying to make out John Shortland's legs in front of me when I saw on the ground two or three small points of white fire. I thought it strange for glow-worms to be so high above the level of the sea, and I called the others back to examine these things. But now I found, as they were all standing in the dark, talking, that wherever you lifted your foot from the wet black peat, immediately afterward a large number of these pale points of clear fire appeared, burning for about a minute, and then gradually disappearing. Some were larger and clearer than others—just as you remember, on a phosphorescent night at sea, there are individual big stars separate from the general rush of white as the steamer goes on. We tried to lift some of the points of light, but could not manage it; so I take it they were not glow-worms or any other living creatures, but an emanation of gas from the peaty soils, only that, unlike the will-o-the-wisp, they were quite stationary, and burned with a clear white or blue-white flame—the size of the most of them not bigger than the head of a common pin, and sometimes about fifteen or twenty of them appearing where one foot had been pressed into the soft soil. Had Mr. Melville been at Gress I should have asked him about it; no doubt he has noticed this thing in his rambles; but he has been away, as I say, and nobody about here has any explanation to offer. The shepherds say that the appearance of this phosphorescence, or electricity, or illuminated gas, or whatever it is, foretells a change in the weather; but I have never yet met with any thing in heaven or earth of which the shepherds did not say the same thing. But as you, my dear Yolande, have not seen this phenomenon, and know absolutely nothing about it, you will be in a position to furnish me with a perfectly consistent scientific theory about it, which I desire to have from you at your convenience.

“A hamper of game goes to you to-day, also a bunch of white heather from

“Your affectionate father,

“R. G. WINTERBOURNE.”

She dwelt over the picture here presented of his solitary life in the north; and she knew that now no longer were there happy dinner parties in the evening, and pleasant friends talking together; and no longer was there any need for Duncan—outside in the twilight—to play “Melville's Welcome Home.”



CHAPTER XXXVIII.

AWAKING.

ANOTHER two days passed, Yolande doing her best to make the time go by briskly and pleasantly. They walked on the promenade or the pier; they drove away inland through quaint little villages and quiet lanes. When the weather was wet they staid indoors, and she read to her mother, or they rigged up the big telescope in the bay-window to follow the slow progress of the distant ships. And the strange thing was that, as Yolande gradually perceived, her mother's intellect seemed to grow clearer and clearer while her spirits grew more depressed.

"I have been in a dream—I have been in a dream," she used to say. "I will try not to go back. Yolande, you must help me. You must give me your hand."

"You have been ill, mother; the sea air will make you strong again," the girl said, making no reference to other matters.

However, that studied silence did not last. On the evening of the fifth day of their stay at Worthing, Yolande observed that her mother seemed still more depressed and almost suffering; and she did all she could to distract her attention and amuse her. At last the poor woman said, looking at her daughter in a curious kind of way,

"Yolande, did you notice when I came away from the house with you that I went back for a moment into my room?"

"Yes, I remember you did."

"I will tell you now why I went back." She put her hand in her pocket and drew out a small blue bottle, which she put on the table. "It was for that," she said, calmly.

A flush of color overspread the hitherto pale features of the girl; it was she who was ashamed and embarrassed; and she said, quickly:

"Yes, I understand, mother—I know what it is. But now you will put it away; you do not want it any longer—"

"I am afraid," the mother said in a low voice. "Some-

times I have tried until it seemed as if I was dying, and that has brought me to life again. Oh, I hope I shall never touch it again: I want to be with you, walking by your side among the other people, and like them—like every one else.”

“And so you shall, mother,” Yolande said; and she rose and got hold of the bottle. “I am going to throw this away.”

“No, no, Yolande; give it to me,” she said, but without any excitement. “It is no use throwing it away. That would make me think of it. I would get more. I could not rest until I had gone to a chemist’s and got more—perhaps some time when you were not looking. But when it is there I feel safe. I can push it away from me.”

“Very well, then,” said Yolande, as she went to the fire-place and placed the bottle conspicuously on the mantel-shelf. Then she went back to her mother. “It shall remain there, mother—as something you have no further need of. That is done with now. It was a great temptation when you were living in lodgings in a town, not in good air; and you were very weak and ill; but soon you will be strong enough to get over your fits of faintness or depression without *that*.” She put her hand on her mother’s shoulder. “It is for my sake that you have put it away?”

In answer she took her daughter’s hand in both hers and covered it with kisses.

“Yes, yes, yes. I have put it away, Yolande, for your sake—I have put it away forever, now. But you have a little excuse for me? You do not think so hardly of me as the others? I have been near dying—and alone. I did not know I had such a beautiful daughter—coming to take care of me, too! And I don’t want you to go away now—not for a while, at least. Stay with me for a little time—until—until I have got to be just like the people we meet out walking—just like every one else; and then I shall have no fear of being alone; I shall never, never touch *that*.”

She glanced at the bottle on the mantel-shelf with a sort of horror. She held her daughter’s hand tight. And Yolande kept by her until, not thinking it was prudent to make too much of this little incident, she begged her mother to come and get her things on for another short stroll before tea.

Toward the evening, however, it was clear that this poor woman was suffering more and more, although she endeavored to put a brave face on it, and only desired that Yolande should be in the room with her. At dinner she took next to nothing; and Yolande, on her own responsibility, begged to be allowed to send for some wine for her. But no. She seemed to think that there was something to be got through, and she would go through with it. Sometimes she went to the window and looked out, listening to the sound of the sea in the darkness. Then she would come back and sit down by the fire, and ask Yolande to read to her—this, that or the other thing. But what she most liked to have read and re-read to her was "A Dream of Fair Women"; and she liked to have Yolande standing by the fire-place, so that she could regard her. And sometimes the tears would gather in her eyes, when the girl came to the lines about Jephthah's daughter:

"emptied of all joy,
Leaving the dance and song.

"Leaving the olive gardens far below,
Leaving the promise of my bridal bower,
The valleys of grape-loaded vines that glow
Beneath the battled tower.

"The light white cloud swam over us. Anon
We heard the lion roaring from his den;
We saw the large white stars rise one by one,
Or, from the darken'd glen,

"Saw God divide the night with flying flame,
And thunder on the everlasting hills.
I heard Him, for He spake, and grief became
A solemn scorn of ills."

"It was not fair—it was not fair," she murmured.

"What, mother?"

"To send you here."

"Where ought I to be, then," she asked, proudly, "except by your side?"

"You? Your young life should not be sacrificed to mine. Why did they ask you? I should thank God, Yolande, if you were to go away this evening—now—if you were to go away, and be happy with your youth and beauty and kind friends; that is the life fit for you."

"But I am not going, mother."

"Ah, you don't know—you don't know," the other said,

with a kind of despair coming over her. "I am ill, Yolande I am wretched and miserable."

"The more reason I should stay, surely."

"I wish you would go away and leave me. I can get back to London. What have I been thinking of is beyond me. I am too ill. But you—you—I shall always think of you as moving through the world like a princess—in sunlight."

"Dear mother," said Yolande, firmly, "I think we said we were going to have no more nonsense. I am not going to leave you. And what you were looking forward to is quite impossible. If you are ill and suffering now, I am sorry; I would gladly bear it for your sake. I have had little trouble in the world; I would take your share. But going away from you I am not. So you must take courage and hope; and some day—ah, some day soon you will be glad."

"But if I am restless to-night," said she, glancing at her daughter, uneasily, "and walking up and down, it will disturb you."

"What does it matter?" said Yolande, cheerfully.

"You might get another room."

"I am not going into any other room. Do you think I would forsake my patient?"

"Will you leave the light burning, then?"

"If you wish it, yes; but not high, for you must sleep."

But when they were retiring to rest the mother begged that the little blue bottle should be placed on the bedroom chimney-piece.

"Why, mother, why? You surely would not touch it?"

"Oh, I hope not! I hope not! But I shall know it is near—if I am like to die."

"You must not fear that, mother. I will put the bottle on the chimney-piece, if you like, but you need not even think of it. That is more likely to cause your death than anything else. And you would not break your promise to me?"

She pressed her daughter's hand; that was all.

Yolande did not go quickly to sleep, for she knew that her mother was suffering—the labored sighs from time to time told her as much. She lay and listened to the wash of the sea along the shingle, and to the tramp of the late wayfarers along the pavement. She heard the people of the house go upstairs to bed. And then, by-and-by, the still

ness of the room, and the effects of the fresh air, and the natural healthiness of youth, combined to make her drowsy, and rather against her inclination, her eyes slowly closed.

She was waked by a moan—as of a soul in mortal agony. But even in her alarm she did not start up; she took time to recover her senses. And if the poor mother were really in such suffering, would it not be better for her to lie as if she were asleep? No appeal could be made to her for any relaxation of the promise that had been given her.

Then she became aware of a stealthy noise; and a strange terror took possession of her. She opened her eyes ever so slightly—glimmering through the lashes only—and there she saw that her worst fears were being realized. Her mother had got out of bed and stolen across the room to the sideboard in the parlor, returning with a glass. Yolande, all trembling, lay and watched. She was not going to interfere—it was not part of her plan; and you may be sure she had contemplated this possibility before now. And very soon it appeared why the poor woman had taken the trouble to go for a glass; it was to measure out the smallest quantity that she thought would alleviate her anguish. She poured a certain quantity of the black-looking fluid into the glass; then she regarded it, as if with hesitation; then she deliberately poured back one drop, two drops, three drops; and drank the rest at a gulp. Then, in the same stealthy fashion, she took the glass to the parlor and left it there, and crept silently back again and into bed.

Yolande rose. Her face was pale, her lips firm. She did not look at her mother; but, just as if she were assuming her to be asleep, she quietly went out of the room, and presently returned with a glass in her hand. She went to the chimney-piece. Very well she knew that her mother's eyes were fixed on her, and intently watching her; and as she poured some of that dark liquid into the glass, no doubt she guessed, the poor woman was imagining that this was an experiment to see what had been taken out of the bottle. But that was not quite Yolande's purpose. When she had poured out, as nearly as she could calculate, the same quantity that her mother had taken, she turned her face to the light, and deliberately drank the contents of the glass. It was done in a second; there was a sweet, mawkish, pungent taste in the mouth, and a shiver of disgust as she

swallowed the thing; then she calmly replaced the bottle on the chimney-piece.

But the mother had sprung from her bed with a wild shriek, and caught the girl by both hands.

“Yolande! Yolande! what have you done?”

“What is right for you, mother, is right for me,” she said, in clear and settled tones. “It is how I mean to do always.”

The frantic grief of this poor creature was pitiable to witness. She flung her arms round her daughter, and drew her to her, and wept aloud, and called down vengeance upon herself from Heaven. And then in a passion of remorse she flew at the bottle that was standing there, and would have hurled it into the fireplace, had not Yolande, whose head was beginning to swim already, interposed, calmly and firmly. She took the bottle from her mother’s hand and replaced it.

“No; it must remain there, mother. It must stand there until you and I can bear to know that it is there, and not to wish for it.”

Even in the midst of her wild distress and remorse there was one phrase in this speech that had the effect of silencing the mother altogether. She drew back, aghast, her face white, her eyes staring with horror.

“You and I?” she repeated. “You and I? You—to become like—like—”

“Yes,” said Yolande. “What is right for you is right for me; that is what I mean to do—*always*. Now, dear mother,” she added, in a more languid way, “I will lie down—I am giddy—”

She sat down on the edge of the bed, putting her hand to her forehead, and rested so awhile; then insensible after a time she drooped down on to the pillow, although the frightened and frantic mother tried to get an arm round her waist, and very soon the girl had relapsed into perfect insensibility.

And then a cry rang through the house like the cry of the Egyptian mothers over the death of their first-born. The poison seemed to act in directly opposite ways in the brains of these two women—the one it plunged into a profound stupor; the other it drove into frenzy. She threw herself on the senseless form, and wound her arms round the girl, and shrieked aloud that she had murdered her child—her beautiful daughter—she was dying—dead—and no one to save

ner—murdered by her own mother! The little household was roused at once, Jane came rushing in, terrified. The landlady was the first to recover her wits, and instantly she sent a house-maid for a doctor. Jane, being a strong-armed woman, dragged the hysterical mother back from the bed, and bathed her young mistress's with eau-de-Cologne; it was all the poor kind creature could think of. Then they tried to calm the mother somewhat, for she was begging them to give her a knife that she might kill herself and die with her child.

The doctor's arrival quieted matters somewhat; and he had scarcely been a minute in the room when his eyes fell on the small blue bottle on the mantelpiece. That he instantly got hold of; the label told him what were the contents; and when he went back to the bedside of the girl, who was lying insensible in a heavy breathing sleep, her chest laboring as if against some weight, he had to exercise some control over the mother to get her to show him precisely the quantity of the fluid that had been taken. The poor woman seemed beside herself. She dropped on her knees before him in a passion of tears, and clasped her hands.

"Save her! save her! save my child to me! If you can give her back to me I will die a hundred times before harm shall come to her—my beautiful child that came to me like an angel, with kindness and open hands, and this is what I have done!"

"Hush! hush!" said the doctor, and he took her by the hand and gently raised her. "Now you must be quiet. I am not going to wake your daughter. If that is what she took she will sleep it off; she is young, and I should say healthy. I am going to let nature work the cure, though I fear the young lady will have a bad headache in the morning. It is a most mischievous thing to have such drugs in the house. "You are her maid, I understand?" he said, turning to Jane.

"Yes, sir."

"Ah. Well, I think for to-night you had better occupy that bed over there, and the young lady's mother can have a bed elsewhere. I don't think you need fear anything—except a headache in the morning. Let her sleep as long as she may. In the morning let her go for a drive in the fresh air, if she is too languid to walk."

But the mother cried so bitterly on hearing of this ar-

rangement that they had to consent to her retaining her place in the room, while Jane said she could make herself comfortable enough in an arm-chair. As for the poor mother, she did not go back to her own bed at all; she sat at the side of Yolande's bed—at the foot of it, lest the sound of her sobbing should disturb the sleeper; and sometimes she put her hand ever so lightly on the bedclothes, with a kind of pat, as it were, while the tears were running down her face.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

“O' BY-GANE DAYS AND ME.”

THE Master of Lynn was walking along Church Street, Inverness, leisurely smoking his morning cigar, when a small boy from the hotel overtook him and handed him a letter. He glanced at the handwriting, and saw it was from his sister; so he put it in his pocket without opening it. Then he went on and into Mr. Macleay's shop.

This was a favorite lounge of his. For not only was it a valuable museum of natural history—all kinds of curiosities and rarities being sent thither to be preserved—but also, to any one with sufficient knowledge, it afforded a very fair report as to what was going on in the different forests. More than that, it was possible for one to form a shrewd guess as to the character of some of the people then wandering about the Highland—the sort of sportsmen, for example, who sent to be stuffed such rare and remarkable birds as gannets, kittiwakes, and skarts, or who wished to have all the honors of a glass case and a painted background conferred on a three-pound trout. It was not difficult (as he sat on the counter or strolled about) to imagine the simple joy with which these trophies had been secured and carefully packed and sent away for preservation; while, on the other hand, some great stag's head—a magnificent and solitary prize—perhaps awoke a touch of envy. The good-natured proprietor of the establishment, busy with his own affairs, let this young man do pretty much what he liked in the place; and so it was that the Master, having had a look at the latest specimens of the skill of the workshop, took out his sister's letter and

read it, and then begged for a sheet of paper and the loan of a pen. He thought he might just as well finish his cigar here, and answer his sister at the same time.

He wrote as follows :

“ INVERNESS, September 29.

“ DEAR POLLY,—I wish you would be pleased to moderate the rancor of your tongue; there is quite enough of that commodity at Lynn. Whoever has told you of the latest row has probably not overstepped the truth; but isn't it a blessed dispensation of Providence that one can obtain a little peace at the Station Hotel? However, that is becoming slow. I wish I knew where Jack Melville is; I would propose a little foreign travel. For one thing, I certainly don't mean to go back to Lynn until Mr Winterbourne has left Allt-nam-Ba; of course he must see very well that the people at the Towers have cut him; and no doubt he understands the reason; and he might ask, don't you see; and very likely he might get angry and indignant (I shouldn't blame him) and then he might ask Yolande to break off the engagement. Such things have happened before. But you needn't get wild with *me*. I don't seek to break off the engagement; certainly not; if that is what they are aiming at they will find me just as pertinacious as you were about Graham (you needn't assume that you have all the obstinacy in the world); and although I'm not too squeamish about most things, still, I'm not going to break my word simply because Auntie Tab doesn't like Mr. Winterbourne's politics.

“ Now there's is a chance for you, Miss Polly. Why don't you set to work to make a leopard change his spots? You think you can talk anybody over. Why don't you talk over Mr. Winterbourne into the paths of virtue and high Toryism? I don't see why it should be so difficult. Of course he's violent enough in the House; but that's to keep in with his constituents; and to talk with him after a day's shooting you wouldn't guess he had any politics at all. I'd bet a sovereign he would rather get a royal than be made a cabinet minister. You'd much better go and coax him into the paths of the just than keep getting into rages with me. You talk as if it was you that wanted to marry Yolande; or rather as if it was you who were going to buy the Corrie-
▼reak side from Sir John, and couldn't wait for the conveying to be done. Such impetuosity isn't in accord with

your advancing years. The fact is, you haven't been having your fair dose of flirtation lately, and you're in a bad temper. But why with me? *I* didn't ask the people to Inver-troy. I can see what sort of people they are by the cart-load of heads Graham has sent here (I am writing in Macleay's shop). If ever I can afford to keep our forest in my own hands there won't be anything of that going on—no matter who is in the house.

“And why should you call upon me for the explanation of the ‘mystery’? What mystery is involved in Yolande's going south? Her father, I understand, leaves on the 15th of October; and I am not surprised that nothing has been said about a lease of the place. Of course Winterbourne must understand. But in the south, my dear Polly, if you would only look at the reasonable aspect of affairs, we may all of us meet on less embarrassing terms; and I for one shall not be sorry to get away for the winter from the society of Tabby and Co. Yolande and I have not quarrelled in the least; on that point you may keep your hair smooth. But I am not at all sure that I am not bound in honor to tell her how I am placed; and what treatment in the future—or rather what no-treatment—she may expect from my affectionate relatives. Of course it can not matter to her. She will be independent of them—I also. But I think I ought to let her know, so that she will not be surprised at their silence; and of course if she resents their attitude to her father (as is very likely)—well, that is their fault, not mine. I am not going to argue any more about it; and as for anything like begging for their patronage or sufferance of Yolande, that is entirely out of the question. *I will not have it*, and I have told you so before; so there may just as well be an end to your lecture. I am a vertebrate animal.

“Yolande is at Worthing—not in London, as you seem to think. I don't know her address; but I have written to Allt-nam-ba for it. I believe she left rather in a hurry. No; I sha'n't send it to you; for you would probably only make mischief by interfering; and indeed it is not with her that any persuasion is necessary. Persuasion?—it's a little common-sense that is necessary. But that kind of plant doesn't flourish at the Towers—I never heard of Jack Melville getting it for his collection of dried weeds.

“Well, good-by. Don't tear your hair.

“Your affectionate brother,

ARCHIE.

“P.S.—It is very kind of you to remind me of baby’s birthday; but how on earth do you expect me to know what to send it? A rocking-horse, or a Latin Grammar, or what?”

He leisurely folded the letter, put it in an envelope, and addressed it; then he turned to have a further chat with Mr. Macleay about the various triumphs of the taxidermic art standing around. Several of these were in the window; and he was idly regarding them, when he caught sight, through the panes, of someone passing by outside. For a second he seemed to pause, irresolute; then he quickly said good-morning to Mr. Macleay, went outside, threw away his cigar, and followed the figure that he had seen passing the window. It was that of a young woman, neatly dressed; indeed, it was no other than Shena Van—though probably Janet Stewart had acquired that name when she was younger, for now she could not strictly be described as fair, though her hair was of a light brown and her eyes of a deep and exceedingly pretty blue.

“Good-morning, Miss Stewart,” said he, overtaking her.

The young lady turned quickly, perhaps with a slight touch of alarm as well as surprise in her look.

“Oh, good morning, Mr. Leslie,” said she, with a certain reserve—not to say coldness—of manner; though the sound of her speech, with its slight accent, was naturally gentle and winning.

“I had no idea you were in Inverness,” said he. “I just caught a glimpse of you while I was in Macleay’s shop. Why, it is a long time since I have seen you now.

She was a little embarrassed and nervous; probably desirous of getting away, and yet not wishing to be rude.

“I am often in Inverness now,” she said, with her eyes averted, “since my sister was married.”

“Are you going to the steamer?” he asked, for she carried a small parcel in her hand.

“Yes,” said she, with some hesitation. “I was thinking of walking to the steamer.”

“Then I suppose I may go as far with you,” said he, “for I have a letter that I want the clerk to have sent on to Inverstry.”

She glanced quickly up and down the street; but he did not give her time to say yea or nay; and then, with something of silence and resentment on her part, they set out

together. It was a very pleasant and cheerful morning ; and their way was out into the country ; for Miss Stewart's destination was that lock on the Caledonian Canal from which the steamer daily sails for the south. Nevertheless the young lady did not seem over-well pleased.

At first they talked chiefly about her friends and relatives, he asking the questions and she answering with somewhat few words ; and she was careful to inform him that now she was more than ever likely to be away from Inverness-shire, for her brother had recently been elected to one of the professorships at Aberdeen, and he had taken a house there, and he liked to have her in the house, because of looking after things. She gave him to understand that there was a good deal of society in the ancient city of Aberdeen, and that the young men of the University were anxious to visit at her brother's house.

"It is a natural thing," said pretty Shena Van, with a touch of pride in her tone, "for the young men to be glad to be friends with my brother ; not only because he is one of the professors, but because he was very distinguished at Edinburgh, and at Heidelberg too—very distinguished indeed."

"Oh yes ; I know that," said the Master of Lynn, warmly. "I have heard Jack Melville speak of him. I dare say your father is very proud of his success."

"Indeed I think we are all rather proud of it," said Miss Stewart.

But when they had crossed the bridge over the wide and shallow waters of the Ness, and were getting away from the town into the quietude of the country, he endeavored to win over his companion to something more of friendliness. He was a gentle-spoken youth ; and this coldness on the part of his ancient comrade he seemed to consider unfair.

"We used to be great friends," said he ; "but I suppose you have forgotten all that. I suppose you have forgotten the time when Shena Van was reaching out for the branches of a rowan-tree, and fell into the burn ?"

She blushed deeply ; but there was the same cold reserve in her manner as she said,

"That was a long time ago."

"Sometime," said he, with a sort of gentleness in his look, "I wish your father had never gone away to Strathaylort ; you and I used to be great friends at one time."

"My father is well pleased with Strathaylort," said

Miss Stewart, "and so are we all; for the manse is larger, and we have many more friends in Strathaylort. And the friends we left—well I suppose they can remember us when they wish to remember us."

This was rather pointed; but he took no notice of it—he was so anxious to win his companion over to a more conciliatory mood.

"And are you as fond of reading poetry as ever?" said he, regarding her; but always her eyes were averted.

"Sometime I read poetry, as I read other things," she said; "but with my sister in Inverness and my brother in Aberdeen, I am very often visiting now."

"Do you remember how we used to read "Horatius" aloud, on the hill above Corrie-an-eich? And the bridge below was the bridge that the brave Horatus kept; and you seemed to see him jump into the Allt-crom, not the Tiber at all; and I am quite sure when you held out your finger and pointed—when

"he saw on Palatinus
The white Porch of his home"—

you were looking at the zinc-roofed coach-house at Allt-nam-Ba."

"I was very silly then," said Shena Van, with red cheeks.

"And when you were Boadicea, a flock of sheep did very well as an army for you to address; only the colliers used to think you were mad."

"I dare say they were right."

"Do you remember the Sword Chant of Thorstein Raudi, and my bringing you a halberd from the Towers—' Might-Giver! I kiss thee; ' ' Joy-Giver! I kiss thee; ' ' Fame Giver! I kiss thee, ? ' "

"Indeed you have a wonderful recollection," said Miss Stewart. "I should think it was time to forget such folly. As one grows up there are more serious things to attend to. I am told"—and here, for the first time, she turned her beautiful dark blue eyes to him, but not her face; so that she was looking at him rather askance, and in a curious, interrogative, and at the same time half-combative fashion—"I am told that you are about to be married."

Now it was his turn to be embarrassed; and he did not meet those too searching eyes.

"As you say, Shena, life turns out to have serious duties

and not to be quite like what one dreams about when one is young," he observed, somewhat vaguely. "That can't prevent your remembering other days with a good deal of affection—"

"But you must let me congratulate you, Mr. Leslie," said she, sharply bringing him to his senses. "And if the wedding is to be at Lynn, I am sure my father would be glad to come over from Strathaylort."

There could be nothing further said on this rather awkward subject just at the moment, for they had arrived at the steamer, and he had to go and hunt out the clerk to intrust him with those small commissions. Then he rejoined Miss Stewart, and set out for the town again; but while she was quite civil and friendly in a formal fashion, he could not draw her into any sort of conjoint regarding of their youthful and sentimental days. Nay, more; when they got back to the bridge she intimated, in the gentlest and most respectful way, that she would rather go through the town alone; and so he was forced to surrender the cruel solace of her companionship.

"Good-by Shena," said he, and held her hand for a moment.

"Good-morning, Mr. Leslie," said she, without turning her eyes toward him.

Then he walked away by the side of the river, with a general sense of being aggrieved settling down on him. Whichever way he turned, people seemed only disposed to thwart and controvert him. Surely there was no harm in being on friendly terms with Shena Van, and in reminding her of the days when he and she were boy and girl together? If he had jilted her, she would have good grounds for being vexed and angry; but he had not. Nothing in that direction had ever been spoken of between them. It is true he had at one time been very much in love with her; and although he had but little romance in his character (that being an ingredient not likely to be fostered by the air of Oxford, or by the society of the young officers of the Seaforth Highlanders), still the glamor of love had for the moment blinded him, and he had seriously contemplated asking her to be his wife. He had argued with himself that this was no stage case of a noble lord wedding a village maiden, but the son of an almost penniless peer marrying a well accomplished young lady of perfectly respectable parentage, a young lady whose beautiful qualities of mind were known

only to a few—only to one, perhaps, who had discovered them by looking into the magic mirror of a pair of strangely dark and clear blue eyes. The infatuation was strong—for a time; but when pretty Mrs. Graham came to learn of it there was trouble. Now the master of Lynn detested trouble. Besides, his sister's arguments in this case were terribly cogent. She granted that Shena Van might be everything he said, and quite entitled, by her intelligence and virtues and amiabilities of character, to become the future mistress of Lynn Towers. But she had not a penny. And was all the labor that had been bestowed on freeing the estate from its burdens to be thrown away? Were the Leslies to remain in those pinched circumstances that prevented their taking their proper place in the country, to say nothing of London? Mrs. Graham begged and implored; there was some distant and awful thunder on the part of his lordship; and then Archie Leslie (who **hated** fuss) began to withdraw himself from the fatal magnetism of those dark blue eyes. Nothing had been said; Miss Stewart could not complain. But the beautiful blue eyes had a measure of shrewdness in them: she may have guessed; nay, more, she may have hoped, and even cherished her own little romantic dreams of affection. Be that as it may, the young Master of Lynn gave way to those entreaties, to that warning of storm. When his sister said he was going to make a fool of himself he got angry, but at the same time he saw as clearly as she that Lynn was starved for want of money. And although love's young dream might never return in all its freshness of wonder and longing, still there were a large number of pretty and handsome young women in this country, some one of whom (if her eyes had not quite the depth and clearness of the eyes of Shena Van) might look very well at the head of the dinner table at Lynn Towers. And so for a time he left Lynn, and went away to Edinburgh; and if his disappointment and isolation did drive him into composing a little song with the refrain,

“O Shena, Shena, my heart is true
To you where'er you go,”

that was only the last up-flickering flame from the dust and ashes of the extinguished romance; and the Master of Lynn had done everything that was required of him, and had a fair right to expect that his relatives would remember that in the future.

And now it can be well understood how, as he walked alone along the shores of the wide river, he should feel that he had been ill-treated. Not even Janet Stewart's friendship was left to him. He had looked once more into those blue eyes; and he could remember them shining with laughter, or dilated with an awful majesty as Boadicea addressed an army of sheep, or perhaps softening a little in farewell when he was going away to Oxford; but now there was nothing but coldness. She did not care to recall the old days. And indeed, as he walked on and out into the country, some other verses that he had learned from Shena Van in those by-gone days began to come into his head, and he grew in a way to compassionate himself, and to think of himself in future years as looking back upon his youth with a strange and pathetic regret—mingled with some other feelings.

“O, mind ye, luve, how aft we left
 The deavin', dinsome toun,
 To wander by the green burn-side
 And hear its water croon?
 The simmer leaves hung ower our heads,
 The flowers burst round our feet,
 And in the gloamin' o' the wood
 The throssil whusslit sweet.”

* * * * *

“O dear, dear Jeanie Morrison,
 Since we were sindered young
 I've never seen your face, nor heard
 The music o' your tongue;
 But I could hug all wretchedness,
 And happy could I dee,
 Did I but ken your heart still dreamed
 O' by-gane days and me!”

These were some of the lines he remembered (they were great favorites of Shena Van in former times); but instead of this compassionating of himself by proxy, as it were, leading him to any gentleness of feeling, it only made him the more bitter and angry. “I have had enough of this—I have had enough of it,” he kept repeating to himself. “Very few men I know have kept as straight as I have. They'd better look out. I have just about enough of this.”

That evening he dined with the officers at Fort George, and drank far more wine than he usually did—for he was very abstemious in that direction. After dinner he proposed unlimited loo; but more moderate counsels prevailed,

and the familiar and innocent sixpenny Nap was agreed upon. But even at this mild performance you can lose a fair amount if you persistently "go Nap" on almost any sort of a hand that turns up.

CHAPTER XL.

A GUESS.

SOME well-known pieces of writing have described to us the ecstatic visions vouchsafed to the incipient opium-eater, and these, or some of these, may be a faithful enough record. At all events, Yolande's first and only experience was of a very different character. All through that terrible night one horror succeeded another, and always she felt as if she were bound and gagged—that she could neither flee away from those hideous things, nor shriek out her fear and cry for aid. First she was in a vast forest of impenetrable gloom; it was night, and yet there was a grayness in the open glade; there was no sky visible; she was alone. Then down one of those glades came a slow procession—figures walking two by two; and at first she thought they were monks, but as she came nearer she could see that within each cloak and hood there was a skeleton with eyes of white fire. They took no heed of her; she could not move; in the awful silence she beheld them range themselves behind the trunks of the great oaks, and although they were now invisible, it appeared to her that she could still see their eyes of fire, and that they were gazing on the figure of a woman that now drew near. The woman was wringing her hands; her hair was dishevelled; she looked neither to the right nor to the left. And then, as she passed, the spectres came out two by two, and formed a crowd and followed her; they pressed on her and surrounded her, though she did not seem to see them; it was a doom overtaking her. The night grew darker; a funeral song was heard far away, not as from any opening heavens, but within the black hollows of the wood—and then the ghastly pageant disappeared.

Presently she was in a white world of snow and ice

and a frantic despair had seized her, for she knew that she was drifting away from the land. This way and that she tried to escape, but always she came to a blue impassable chasm. She tried to spring from one side to the other, but something held her back; she could not get away. There was a fire-mountain there, the red flames looking so strange in the middle of the white world; and the noise of the roaring of it was growing fainter and more faint as she floated away on this moving ice. The sea that she was entering—she could see it far ahead of her—was black, but a thin gray mist hung over it; and she knew that once she was within that mist she would see nothing more, nor be heard of more, for ever and ever. She tried no longer to escape; horror had paralyzed her; she wanted to call aloud for help, but could not. Denser and denser grew the mist; and now the black sea was all around her; she was as one already dead; and when she tried to think of those she was leaving forever, she could not remember them. Her friends? the people she knew? she could remember nothing. This vague terror and hopelessness filled her mind; otherwise it was a blank; she could look, but she could not think; and now the black waters had reached almost to her feet, and around her were the impenetrable folds of air, so that she could no longer see.

And so she passed from one vision of terror to another all through the long night, until in the gray of the morning she slowly awoke to a sort of half-stupefied consciousness. She had a headache, so frightful that at first she could scarcely open her eyes; but she did not mind that; she was overjoyed that she could convince herself of her escape from those hideous phantoms, and of her being in the actual living world. Then she began to recollect. She thought of what she had done—perhaps with a little touch of pride, as of something that *he* might approve, if ever he should come to know. Then, though her head was throbbing so dreadfully, she cautiously opened her eyes to look around.

No sooner had she done so than Jane, who was awake, stole noiselessly to her young mistress's bedside. Yolande made a gesture to insure silence—for she saw that her mother was lying asleep; then she rose, wrapped a shawl round her, and slipped out of the room, followed by her maid.

“What shall I get you, miss?—I have kept the fire alight down-stairs. I can get you a cup of tea in a minute.”

"No, no, never mind," said Yolande, pressing her hand to her head. "Tell me about my mother. How long has she been asleep?"

"Not very long. Oh, she has passed a dreadful night—the poor lady. She was so excited at first I thought she would have killed herself; but in the end she fairly cried herself to sleep, after I got her to lie down on the bed. And you don't feel very ill, miss, I hope? But it was a terrible thing for you to do."

"What?"

"I beg your pardon, miss," said Jane, with a little embarrassment; "but I guessed what you had done. I guessed from what the poor lady said. Oh, you won't do that again, will you miss? You might have killed yourself, and then what ever should I have said to your papa? And I don't think you will ever have need to do it again—I heard what the poor lady kept saying to herself; you won't have to do any such terrible thing again; she declares that she will kill herself before you have cause to do that again."

"I hope there won't be any occasion," said Yolande, calmly; and then she went to the window.

It was truly a miserable morning—dull and gray and overclouded; and it had rained during the night; the street and the terrace were sodden and wet and a leaden-hued sea tumbled on to the empty beach. But notwithstanding that, and notwithstanding her headache, Yolande vaguely felt that she had never looked on a fairer picture. This plain, matter-of-fact, commonplace world was such a beautiful thing after those phantom horrors through which she had passed. She liked to look at the solid black boats high up on the shingle, at the terraced footway, at the iron railing along the road. She began to wish to be out in that substantial world; to see more of it, and more closely: perhaps the cold sea-breezes would temper the racking pain in her head?

"Jane," said she, "do you think you could slip into the room and bring me my things without waking my mother?"

"But you are not going out, miss?" said the maid, wondering, "The night is scarcely over yet. Won't you go back and lie down?"

"No, no," said Yolande, almost with a shudder of dread. "I have had terrible dreams—I want to get outside—and I have a headache besides. Perhaps the fresh air will make it better. But you can lie down, Jane, after

I have gone ; and don't wake my mother, no matter how late she sleeps. When I come back, perhaps the people in the house will be up, and I shall try to take some breakfast—”

“I could get it for you now, miss,” said Jane, eagerly.

“I could not touch it,” the girl said, shivering.

The maid went and fetched her things ; and when she had dressed she stole noiselessly down the stairs and got outside. How cold and damp the air felt ! but yet it was fresh and new and strange ; the familiar sound of the sea seemed pleasant and companionable. As yet, in the dull gray dawn, the little town appeared to be asleep ; all the people she could find as she passed were a policeman leaning against a railing and reading a newspaper, two men working at the roadway, and a maid-servant cleaning the windows of a first-floor parlor. She walked on, and pushed back the hair from her forehead to let the cold sea breeze dispel this racking pain. But although the headache was a bad one, and although it was a most rare thing for her to know what a headache was, still it did not depress her. She walked on with an increasing gladness. This was a fine, real world ; there were no more processions of skeletons, or arctic mists, or fields covered with coffins. This was Worthing : there was the pier ; these were most substantial and actual waves that came rolling in until they thundered over and rushed seething and hissing up the beach. Moreover, was there not a gathering sense of light somewhere— as if the day were opening and inclined to shine ? As she walked on in the direction of Lower Lancing a more spacious view of sea and sky opened out before her, and it appeared to her that away in the direction of Brighton the clouds seemed inclined to band up. And then, gradually and here and there, faint gleams of a warmer light came shooting over from the east ; and in course of time, as she still followed the windings of the shore, the rising sun shone level along the sea, and the yellow brown waves, though their curved hollows were in shadows as they rolled on to the beach, had silver-gleaming crests, and the wide stretches of retreating foam that gurgled and hissed down the shingly slopes were a glare of cream white dazzling to the eyes.

She walked quickly—and proudly. She had played a bold game, and she hoped that she might win. Nay, more, she was prepared to play it again. She would not shrink from any sacrifice. It was with no light heart that she had under-

taken this duty. And would *he* approve?—that was always her secret thought, though generally she tried to banish all remembrances of what was by-gone. Should he ever come to know of what she had done? For it was her own planning. It was not his suggestion at all; probably, if he had thought of such a means of terrorism, he would not have dared to recommend it. But she had laid this plan; and she watched her opportunity; and she was glad that some days had elapsed before that opportunity had occurred, so that her mother had had time to become attached to her. And what if that once did not suffice? Well, she was prepared to go on. It was only a headache (and even that was quietly lessening, for she had an elastic constitution, and was a most capable walker). What were a few headaches? But no, she did not think that much repetition of this experiment would be necessary; she could not believe that any mother alive could look on and see her daughter poisoning herself to save her.

The morning cleared and brightened. When she got to Lancing she struck inland by the quiet country ways; a kind of gladness filled her. And if she should be successful, after all—if the thing that she had feared was to turn out a beautiful thing, if the rescue of this poor mother was to be her reward—what should she not owe him who had told her what her duty was! He had not been afraid to tell her, although she was only a girl. Ah, and where was he now? Driven away into banishment, perhaps, by what had happened up there in the north, through her blindness and carelessness. Once or twice indeed, during these long evenings, she had followed out a curious fancy that perhaps his crossing the Monalea hills to catch the afternoon train at Kingussie had really some connection with her coming south. Had he wished to see that she was secure and guarded, now that she was embarked on an errand of his suggestion? It pleased her to think of him being in the same train. Perhaps, in the cold gray morning at Euston Station, standing backward from the people, he had watched her get into the cab; perhaps he had even followed in his own cab, and seen her enter the hotel? Why should he have hurried to catch that particular train? Why should he have adopted that arduous route across the hills, unless it was that he wished to travel with her, and yet without her knowing it? But it was so strange he should

make this long journey merely to see that she was safely lodged in her hotel.

Now she had been studying this matter on one or two occasions, and letting her fancy play about it with a strange curiosity; but it was on this particular morning, as she was entering the little village of Sompoting, that a new light suddenly flashed in on her. Who was it, who had told Lawrence & Lang of her being in London? Who had explained to them what her business was? who had asked Mr. Lang to go to her hotel and see her? Was it possible, then, that he had journeyed to London in that same train, and gone direct to the lawyer's office, so that she should have their assistance? He knew they were her father's lawyers, for she herself had told him to whom she should apply in case of difficulty; whereas, on the other hand, it was not possible for her father to have written. Had he been guarding her, then, and watching over her all that time—perhaps even looking on? And if looking on—Then, in a breathless kind of way, she recalled the circumstances of her taking her mother away. She had been disturbed and bewildered, no doubt; still, had she not the impression of some one darting by—some one who felled the man who had seized her arm, and then passed quickly by? Surely surely it must have been he. Who else could have known? Who else could have interfered? Her heart grew warm with gratitude toward him. Ah, there was the true friend, watching over her, but still keeping back, and unrequited by a single word of thanks. She began to convince herself that this must have been so. She accused herself of blindness that she had not seen it before. And for how long had his guardianship continued? When had he gone away? Perhaps—

Then her face grew pale. Perhaps he was even now in Worthing, still exercising this invisible care over her? Perhaps she might meet him, by some accident, in the street? She stopped short in the road, apparently afraid to go on. For what would their meeting be, if such a meeting were to happen?—But no, it would not happen—it should not happen. Even if he were in Worthing (and she tried to get rid of the dreams and fancies begotten of this morning walk) he would not seek to see her; he would avoid her rather; he would know, as well as she, that it was not fit and proper that they should meet. And why should he be in Worthing? His guardianship there could be of no avail;

she had nothing to fear in any direction where he could help. The more she calmly reviewed the possibilities of the case the more she considered it likely that he had indeed come to London with her; that he had given instructions to the lawyers; perhaps, even, that he had been present when she bore her mother off; but even if these things were so, by this time he must have left, perceiving that he could do no more. And whither? She had a kind of dim notion that he would not quickly return to Gress. But whither, then—whither? She saw him an outcast and a wanderer, she imagined him away in far places, and the morning seemed less cheerful now. Her face grew grave; she walked firmly on. She was returning to her appointed task, and to any trials that might be in store for her in connection with it.

She was getting near to Broadwater, when she saw along the road a pony-carriage coming quickly in her direction; the next moment she perceived that her mother was in it, and that Jane (who had been brought up in the country) was driving. A few seconds sufficed to bring them to her; and then the mother, who seemed much excited, got out from the trap and caught her daughter by both shoulders, and stroked her hair and her face in a sort of delirium of joy.

“We have been driving everywhere in search of you—I was so afraid. Ah, you are alive and well, and beautiful as ever. My child, my child, I have not murdered you!”

“Hush mother,” said the girl, quite calmly. “It is a pity you got up so early. I came out for a walk, because my head was bad; it is getting better now. I will drive you back if you like.”

She drew the girl aside for a few yards, caressing her arm and stroking her fingers.

“My child, I ought to be ashamed and miserable; but to see you alive and well—I—I was in despair—I was afraid. But you need not fear any more, Yolande, you need not fear any more.”

“I hope not, mother,” said Yolande, gravely, and she regarded her mother. “For I think I would rather die than go through again such a night as last night.”

“But you need not fear—you need not fear,” said the other, pressing her hand. “Oh no; when I saw you lying on the bed last night, then—then I seemed to know what I

was. But you need not fear. No, never again will you have to poison yourself in order to shame me."

"It was not to shame you mother; it was to ask you not to take any more of that—that medicine."

"You need not fear, Yolande, you need not fear," she repeated eagerly. "Oh no; I have everything prepared now. I will never again touch it; you shall never have to sacrifice yourself like that—"

"Well, I am glad of it, dear mother, for both our sakes," Yolande said. "I hope it will not cost you much suffering."

"Oh no, it will not cost me much suffering," said the mother, with a strange sort of smile.

Something in the manner attracted her daughter's attention.

"Shall we go back?" she asked.

"But I wish you to understand, Yolande, that you need have no longer any fear—"

"You have promised, mother."

"Yes; but did I not promise before? Ah, you—you, so young, so strong, so self-reliant—you can not tell how weak one can be. But now that is all over. This time I know. This time I can tell that I have tasted that poison for the last time—if there were twenty bottles standing by, it would not matter."

"You must nerve yourself, mother—"

"Oh but I have made it secure in another way," she said, with a curious smile.

"How, then?"

"Well, what am I worth in the world? What is the value of my life? It is a wreck and worthless; to save it for a week, for a day, would I let you have one more headache, and be driven away into the country by myself like this? Ah, no, Yolande; but now you are secure; there will be no more of that. When I feel that I must break my promise again, when I am like to die with weakness and—and the craving, then, if there were twenty bottles standing by, you need not fear. If living is not bearable, then, rather than you should do again what you did last night, I will kill myself—and gladly."

Yolande regarded her with the same calm air.

"And that is the end you have appointed for me mother?"

Her mother was stupified for a second ; then she uttered a short, quick cry of terror.

“ Yolande, what do you mean ? ”

“ I think I have told you, mother, that I mean to follow your example in all things—to the end, whatever it may be. Do not let us speak of it.”

She put her hand on her mother’s arm, and led her back to the pony-carriage. But the poor woman was trembling violently. This terrible threat had quite unnerved her. It had seemed to her easy—if the worst came to the worst, if she could control her craving no longer—that, sooner than her daughter should be sacrificed, she herself should throw away this worthless fragment of existence that remained to her. And now Yolande’s manner frightened her. This easy way of escape was going to produce the direst of catastrophes. She regarded the girl—who was pre-occupied and thoughtful, and who allowed Jane to continue to drive—all the way back ; and there was something in her look that sent the conviction to her mother’s heart that that had been no idle menace.

When they got back to Worthing, Yolande set about the usual occupations of the day with her accustomed composure, and even with a measure of cheerfulness. She seemed to attach little importance to the incident that had just happened ; and probably wished her mother to understand that she meant to see this thing through, as she had begun it. But it was pitiable to see the remorse on the mother’s face when a slight contraction of Yolande’s brows told that from time to time her head still swam with pain.

The first hamper of game arrived from the north that day ; and it was with a curious interest that the mother (who was never done wondering at her daughter’s knowledge and accomplishments and opinions) listened to all that Yolande could tell her about the various birds and beasts. As yet the ptarmigan showed no signs of donning their winter plumage ; but the mountain hares here and there—especially about the legs—showed traces of white appearing underneath the brownish-gray. Both at the foot and at the top of the hamper was a thick bed of stag’s-horn moss (which grows in extraordinary luxuriance at Alt-nam-Ba), and Yolande guessed—and guessed correctly—that Duncan, who had observed her on one or two occasions bring home some of that moss, had fancied that the young lady would like to have some sent to her to the south. And she wondered

whether there was any other part of the world where people were so thoughtful and so kind, even to visitors who were almost strangers to them.

At night, when Yolande went into the bedroom, she noticed that there was no bottle on the mantel-piece.

"Where is it, mother?" she said.

"I have thrown it away. You need not fear now, Yolande," her mother said. And then she regarded her daughter. "Don't mind what I said this morning, child. It was foolish. If I can not bear the suffering well, it can not be so hard a thing to die; that must come if one waits."

"You are not going to die, mother," said Yolande, gently patting her on the shoulder. "You are going to live; for some day, as soon as you are strong enough, you and I are going to Nice, to drive all the way along to Genoa; and I know all the prettiest places to stop at. But you must have courage and hope and determination. And you must get well quickly, mother; for I should like to go away with you; it is such a long, long time since I smelt the lemon blossom in the air."

CHAPTER XLI.

A MESSAGE.

As subsequent events were to prove, Yolande had, by this one bold stroke, achieved the victory she had set her heart upon. But as yet she could not know that. She could not tell that the frantic terror of the poor mother at the thought that she might have killed her only child would leave an impression strong enough to be a sufficient safeguard. Indeed, she could see no end to the undertaking on which she had entered; but she was determined to prosecute that with unflinching patience, and with the hope in the final result; and also, perhaps, with the consciousness that this immediate duty absorbed her from the consideration of other problems of her life.

But while she tried to shut up all her cares and interests within this little town of Worthing—devising new amusements and occupations, keeping her mother as much as pos-

sible in the open air, and lightly putting aside the poor woman's remorse over the incidents of that critical night—there came to her reminders from the outer and farther world. Among these was the following letter from the Master of Lynn, which she read with strangely diverse emotions contending for mastery in her mind :

“STATION HOTEL, INVERNESS, *October 2.*”

“MY DEAREST YOLANDE,—It is only this morning that I have got your address from Allt-nam-Ba ; and I write at once, though perhaps you will not care to be bothered with much correspondence just at present. Your father has told me what has taken you to the south, and indeed I had guessed something of the kind from the note you sent me when you were leaving. I hope you are well, and not overtroubled ; and when you have time I should be glad to have a line from you—though I shall not misconstrue your silence if you prefer to be silent. In fact, I probably should not write to you now but that your father is leaving Allt-nam-Ba shortly, and I suppose he will see you as soon as he goes south, and I think I am bound to give you some explanation as to how matters stand. No doubt he will think it strange that I have rather kept out of his way, and very likely he will be surprised that my father has never called at the lodge, or shown any sign of civility, and so forth. Well, the plain truth is, dear Yolande, that I have quarrelled with my father, if that can be called a quarrel which is all on one side—for I simply retire, on my part, and seek quiet in an Inverness hotel. The cause of the quarrel, or estrangement is that he opposed to our marriage ; and he has been put up to oppose it, I imagine, chiefly by my aunt, the elderly and agreeable lady whom you will remember meeting at the Towers. I think I am bound in honor to let you know this ; not that it in the least affects you or me, as far as our marriage is concerned, for I am old enough to manage my own affairs ; but in order to explain a discourtesy which may very naturally have offended your father, and also to explain why I, feeling ashamed of the whole business, have rather kept back, and so failed to thank your father, as otherwise I should have done, for his kindness to me. Of course I knew very well, when we became engaged in Egypt, that my father, whose political opinions are of a fine old crusted order, would be rather aghast at my marrying the

daughter of the Member of Slagpool; but I felt sure that when he saw you and knew you, dear Yolande, he would have no objection; and indeed I did not anticipate that the eloquence of my venerated aunt would have deprived him of the use of his senses. One ought not to write so of one's parent, I know; but facts are facts; and if you are driven out of your own home through the bigotry of an old man and the cattish temper of an old woman, and if you have the most angelic of sisters take to nagging at you with letters, and if you are forced into sweet seclusion of a hotel adjoining a railway station, then the humor of the whole affair begins to be apparent, and you may be inclined to call things by their real names. I have written to your father to say that he need not bother about either the dogs or horses; when he has left I will run down to Allt-nam-Ba and see them sent off; but I have not told him why I am at present in Inverness; and I tell you, my dear Yolande, because I think you ought to know exactly how matters stand. I should not be at all surprised to hear from you that you had imagined something of the state of the case; for you must have wondered at their not asking you and your father to dinner, or something of the kind, after Polly taking you to the Towers when you first came north; but, at all events, this is how we are situated now, and I should be inclined to make a joke of the whole affair if it were not that when I think of you I feel a little bit indignant. Of course it can not matter to you—not in the least. It is disagreeable, that is all. If dogs delight to bark and bite, it does not much matter so long as they keep their barking and biting among themselves. It is rather hard, certainly, when they take possession of your house, and turn you out into the street; especially when you have a lovely sister come and accuse you of having no higher ambition in life than playing billiards with commercial travellers.

“I shall hang on here, I expect, until our other tenants—they who have the forest—leaves for the south; then I shall be able to make some final arrangements with our agent here; after which I shall consider myself free. You must tell me, dear Yolande, when and where you wish to see me. Of course I don't wish to inconvenience or trouble you in any way—I shall leave it entirely in your hands as to what you would have me do. Perhaps, if I go away for a while, the people at Lynn may come to their senses. Polly has been at them once or twice; she is a warm ally

of yours; but, to tell you the truth, I would not have you made the subject of any appeal. No word of that kind shall come from me. Most likely when the last of the people that the Grahams have with them at Inverstroy have gone, Polly may go over to Lynn and establish herself there, and have a battle royal with my revered aunt. Of course I would not bother you with the details of this wretched family squabble if I did not think that some explanation were due both to you and to your father.

“I shall be glad to hear from you, if you are not too much occupied. Yours, affectionately,

“ARCHIE LESLIE.

“P.S.—I hope to be able to leave here about the 22d.”

Her first impulse was to rush away at once and telegraph to him, begging him not to come south; but a moment's reflection showed her that was unnecessary. She re-read the letter; there was nothing of the impetuosity of a lover in it, but rather a studied kindness, and also a reticence with regard to her present surroundings and occupations that she could not but respect. For she knew as well as any one that this matter concerned him too; and she could even have forgiven a trace of apprehension on his part, seeing that a young man about to marry is naturally curious about the new conditions that are to surround him. His silence on this point seemed part of the careful consideration that prevailed throughout this message to her. Then it was so clear that he would be ruled by her wishes. He was not coming to claim her by the right he had acquired. She could put away this letter for future consideration, as she had for the moment put aside her engagement ring. While she was first reading it, some strange fancies and feelings had held possession of her—a quick contrition, a desire to tell him everything, and so release herself from this bond, a remonstrance with herself, and a vague kind of hope that she might make atonement by a life-long devotion to him, after this first duty to her mother had been accomplished. But these conflicting resolves she forced herself to discard. She would not even answer this letter now. There was no hurry. He would not come to Worthing if she did not wish it. And was it not fortunate that she could turn aside from unavailing regrets, and from irresolute means and purposes, to the actual needs of the moment? She calmly put the letter in her pocket, and

went away to see whether her mother were not ready for her morning drive. And now it had come to pass that whenever Yolande drew near there was a look of affection and gratitude in this poor woman's eyes that made the girl's heart glad.

Day after day passed; the weather happened to be fine, and their exploration of the surrounding country was unwearyed. The castles of Arundel and Bramber, the parks of Augmering and Badworth, Harrow Hill, Amberley Wild Brook, Sullington, Washington, Storrington, Ashington—they knew them all; and they had so educated the wise old pony that, when Jane was not with them, and they were walking along by the hedgeways or climbing a hill, they could safely leave him and the pony-carriage far behind them, knowing that he would come up at his leisure, keeping his own side of the road, and refusing to be tempted by the greenest of way-side patches. Yolande, both at home and abroad, was always on the watch, and carefully concealed the fact. But now she was beginning less and less to fear, and more and more to hope; nay, at times, and rather in spite of herself, a joyful conviction would rest upon her that she had already succeeded. Four days after that relapse, a desperate fit of depression overtook the poor woman; but she bravely fought through it.

"You need not fear this time, Yolande," she would say, with a sad smile. "I said that once before, but I did not know then. I had not seen you lying on the bed—perhaps dying, as I thought. You shall have no more headaches through me."

"Ah, dear mother," said Yolande, "in a little time you will not even think of such things. You will have forgotten them. It will be all like a dream to you."

"Yes, like a dream—like a dream," the other said, absently. "It was in a dream that you came to me. I could not understand—I heard you, but I could not understand. And then it seemed that you were leading me away, but I scarcely knew who you were. And the evening in the hotel, when you were showing me your things, I could scarcely believe it all; and when you said you would get me a dressing-bag, I asked myself why I should take that from a stranger. You were so new to me—and tall—and so beautiful—it was a kind of wonder—I could not think you were indeed my own daughter, but a kind of angel, and I was glad to follow you."

"Well, I carried you off," said Yolande, plainly (for she did not like to encourage fantasy). "There is no mistake about it; and I shall not let you go back to those friends of yours, who were not at all good friends to you; that also is quite certain."

"Oh, no, no?" she would say, grasping the girl's hand. "I am not going back—never, never, to that house! You need not fear now, Yolande."

It has already been mentioned that this poor woman was greatly astonished that Yolande should know so much, and should have seen so much, and read so many different things. And this proved to be a field of quite unlimited interest; for there was not a single opinion or experience of the girl that she did not regard with a strange fascination and sympathy. Whether Yolande was relating to her legendary stories of Brittany, of which she knew a good many, or describing the lonely streets of Pompeii, or telling her of the extraordinary clearness of the atmosphere in Washington (the physical atmosphere, that is), she listened with a kind of wonder, and with the keenest curiosity to know more and more of this young life that had grown up apart from hers. And then Yolande so far wandered from the path of virtue—as laid down by her father—as sometimes to read aloud in French; and while she frequently halted and stumbled in reading aloud in English, there never was any stumbling, but rather a touch of pride, when she was pronouncing such sonorous line as this—

"*La vaste mere murmure autour de son cercueil,*"

and it was strange to the poor mother that her daughter should be more at home in reading French than reading English. She would ask the minutest questions—about Yolande's life at the Chateau, about her life on board ship during her various voyages, about her experiences in those mountain solitudes of the north. Her anxiety to be always in the society of her daughter was insatiable; she could scarcely bear to have her out of sight. And when Lawrence & Lang sent her, in the course of time, her usual allowance of money, her joy was extreme. For now, whenever she and Yolande went out, she scanned the shop windows with an eager interest, and always she was buying this, that, or the other trinket, or bit of pretty-colored silk, or something of the kind for the girl to wear. Yolande had rather severe

notions in the way of personal adornment ; but she was well content to put a bit of color round her neck or an additional silver hoop round her wrist when she saw the pleasure in her mother's eyes.

At length she felt justified in sending the following letter to her father :

“ WORTHING, October 12.

“ MY DEAR PAPA,—I intend this to reach you before you leave Allt-nam-Ba, because it carries good news, and I know you have been anxious. I think every thing goes well—sometimes I am quite sure of it—sometimes I look forward to such a bright future. It has been a great struggle and pain (but not to me ; please do not speak of me at all in your letters, because that is nothing at all), but I have not so much fear now. Perhaps it is too soon to be certain ; but I can not explain to you in a letter what it is that gives me such hope, that drives away what reason suggests, and *compels* me to think that all will be well. Partly it is my mother's look. There is an assurance in it of her determination—of her feeling that all is safe now ; again and again she says to me, “ I have been in a dream, but now I am come out of it. You need not fear now.” Mr. Melville said I was not to be too sanguine, and always to be watchful ; and I try to be that ; but I can not fight against the joyful conviction that my mother is now safe from that thing. Only she is so weak and ill yet—she tries to be brave and cheerful, to give me comfort ; but she suffers. Dear papa, it is madness that you should reproach yourself for doing nothing, and propose to take us to the Mediterranean. No, no ; it will not do at all. My mother is too weak yet to go anywhere ; when she is well enough to go I will take her ; but I must take her alone ; she is now used to me ; there must be no such excitement as would exist if you were to come for us. I am very thankful to Mr. Shortlands that you are going to Dalescroft ; and I hope you will find charming people at his house, and also that the shooting is good. Dear papa, I hope you will be able to go over to Slag-pool while you are in the north ; and perhaps you might give an address or deliver a lecture—there are many of the members doing that now, as I see by the newspapers and you owe something to your constituents for not grumbling about your going to Egypt.

“I hope everything has been comfortable at the lodge since I left; but that I am sure of, for Mrs. Bell would take care. You must buy her something very pretty when you get to Inverness, and send it to her as from you and me together—something very pretty indeed, papa, for she was very kind to me, and I would not have her fancy that one forgets. Mr. Leslie says in a letter that he will see to the ponies and dogs being sent off, so that you need have no trouble; he is at the Station Hotel, as probably you know, if you wish to call and thank him. I remember Duncan saying that when the dogs were going he would take them over the hills to Kingussie, and go with them by the train as far as Perth, where he has relatives, and there he could see that the dogs had water given them in the morning. But you will yourselves take them, perhaps, from Inverness? Another small matter, dear papa, if you do not mind the trouble, is this—would you ask some one to pack up for me and send here the boards and drying-paper and hand-press that I had for the wild flowers? We go much into the country here, and have plenty of time in the evening; and my mother is so much interested in any pursuit of mine that this would be an additional means of amusing her. You do not say whether you have heard anything farther of Mr. Melville.

“Do not think I am sad, or alone, or repining, Oh no; I am very well; and I am very happy when I see my mother pleased with me. We do a hundred things—examine the shop windows, walk on the pier or along the promenade, or we drive to different places in the country, and sometimes we have lunch at the old-fashioned inns, and make the acquaintance of the people—so good-natured they are, and well pleased with their own importance; but I do not understand them always, and my mother laughs. We call the pony Bertrand du Guesclin; I do not remember how it happened; but, at all events, he is not as adventurous as the Connetable: he is too wise to run any risks. But *when I am quite sure*, and if my mother is well enough for the fatigue of the voyage, I think I will take her to the south of France, and then along the Riviera, for I fear the winter here, and she so delicate. Dear papa, you say I am not to mind the expense; very well, you see I am profiting by your mands. In the meantime I would not dare. I try to keep down my excitement; we amuse ourselves with the shops with the driving, and what not; it is all simple, pleasant,

and I wait for the return of her strength. Yes, I can see she is much depressed sometimes; and then it is that she has been accustomed to fly for relief to the medicines; but now I think that is over, and the best to be looked forward to. Yes, in spite of caution, in spite of reason, I am already almost assured. There is something in her manner toward me that convinces me; there is a sympathy which has grown up; she looks at me as she does not look at any one else, and I understand. It is this that convinces me.

"Will you give a farewell gift to each of the servants, besides their wages? I think they deserve it; always they helped me greatly, and were so willing and obliging, instead of taking advantage of my ignorance. I would not have them think that I did not recognize it, and was ungrateful. And *please*, papa, get something *very* pretty for Mrs. Bell. I do not know what: something she could be proud to show to Mr. Melville would probably please her best. Write to me when you get to Dalescourt.

"Your affectionate daughter,

YOLANDE."

There is no doubt that Yolande made these repeated references to Mr. Melville with the vague expectation of learning that perhaps he had returned to Gress. But if that was her impression she was speedily undeceived. The very next morning, as she went down into the small lobby, she saw something white in the letter-box of the door. The bell had not been rung, so that the servant-maid had not taken the letter out. Yolande did so, and saw that it was addressed to herself—in a handwriting that she instantly recognized. With trembling fingers she hastily broke open the envelope, and then read these words, written in pencil across a sheet of note-paper:

"You have done well. You will succeed. But be patient. Good-by. J. M."

She stood still—bewildered—her heart beating quickly. Had he been there all the time, then?—always near her, watching her, guarding her, observing the progress of the experiment he had himself suggested? And now whither had he gone—without a word of thanks and gratitude? Her mother was coming down the stairs. She quickly concealed the letter, and turned to meet her. In the dusk of this lobby the mother observed nothing strange or unusual in the look of her daughter's face.

CHAPTER XLII.

A LAST INTERVENTION.

IT has already been said of Mrs. Graham, as of her brother, that she was not altogether mercenary. She had a certain share of sentiment in her composition. It is true, she had summarily stamped out the Master's boyish fancies with regard to Janet Stewart; but then, on the other hand (when the danger to the estates of Lynn was warded off), she could afford to cherish those verses to Shena Van with a sneaking fondness. Nay, more than that, she paid them the compliment of imitation—unknown to her husband and everybody else; and it may be worth while to print this, her sole and only literary effort, if only to show that, just as seamstresses imagine the highest social circles to be the realm of true romance, and like to be told of the woes and joys of high-born ladies, so this pretty Mrs. Graham, being the only daughter of a nobleman, when casting about for a properly sentimental situation, must needs get right down to the bottom of the social ladder, and think it fine to speak of herself as a sailor's lass. One small touch of reality remained—the hero she named Jim. But here are the verses to speak for themselves :

“ I care not a fig for your brag, you girls
 And dames of high degree,
 Or for all your silks and satins and pearls,
 As fine as fine may be ;
 For I'll be as rich as dukes and earls
 When my Jim comes home from sea.

“ It's in Portsmouth town that I know a lane,
 And a small house jolly and free,
 That's sheltered well from the wind and the rain,
 And as snug as snug can be ;
 And it's there that we'll be sitting again
 When my Jim comes home from sea.

“ 'Twas a fine brave sight when the yards were
 manned,
 Though my eyes could scarcely see ;
 It's a long, long sail to the Rio Grand,'
 And a long, long waiting for me ;
 But I'll envy not any one in the land
 When my Jim comes home from sea.

“ So here’s to your health, you high-born girls
 And ladies of great degree,
 And I hope you’ll all be married to earls
 As proud as proud may be;
 But I wouldn’t give fourpence for all your pearls
 When my Jim comes home from sea.”

Of course she carefully concealed these verses—especially from her husband, who would have led her a sad life if he had found them and discovered the authorship; and they never attained to the dignity of type in the *Inverness Courier*, where the lines to Shena Van had appeared; but all the same, pretty Mrs. Graham regarded them with a certain pleasure, and rather approved of the independence of the Portsmouth young lady, although she had a vague impression that she might not be quite the proper sort of guest to ask to Inverstory.

Now her rager and dismay over the possible breaking down of the scheme which she had so carefully formed and tended were due to various causes, and did not simply arise from a wish that the Master of Lynn should marry a rich wife. It was her project, for one thing, and she had a certain sentimental fondness in regarding it. Had she not wrought for it, too, and striven for it? Was it for nothing that she had trudged through the dust of the Merhadj bazaars, and fought with cockroaches in her cabin, and grasped with the Egyptian heat all those sweltering afternoons? She began to consider herself ill-treated, and did not know which to complain of the more—her brother’s indifference or her father’s obstinacy. Then she could get no sort of sympathy from her husband. He only laughed, and went away to look after his pheasants. Moreover, she knew very well that this present condition of affairs could not last. The Master’s ill-temper would increase rather than abate. Yolande would grow accustomed to his neglect of her. Perhaps Mr. Winterbourne would interfere, and finally put an end to that pretty dream she had dreamed about as they went sailing down the Mediterranean.

Accordingly she determined to make one more effort. If she should not be able to coax Lord Lynn into a more complaisant frame of mind, at least she should go on to Allt-nam-Ba and make matters as pleasant as possible with Mr. Winterbourne before he left. The former part of her endeavor, indeed, she speedily found to be hopeless. She had no sooner arrived at the Towers than she sought out her fa-

ther and begged him to be less obdurate; but when, as she was putting forward Corrievreak as her chief argument, she was met by her father's affixing to Corrievreak, or rather prefixing to it, a solitary and emphatic word—a word that was entirely out of place, too, as applied to a sanctuary—she knew it was all over. Lord Lynn sometimes used violent language, for he was a hot-tempered man, but not language of that sort; and when she heard him utter that dreadful wish about such a sacred thing as the sanctuary of a deer forest, she felt it was needless to continue farther.

“Very well papa,” said she, “I have done my best. It is not my affair. Only everything might have been made so pleasant for us all.”

“Yes, and for the Slagpool Radicals,” her father said, contemptuously. “I suppose they would land at Foyers with banners, and have picnics in the forest.”

“At all events, you must remember this, papa,” said Mrs. Graham, with some sharpness, “that Archie is a gentleman. He is pledged to marry Miss Winterbourne, and marry her he will.”

“Let him, and welcome!” said this short, stout, thick person with the bushy eyebrows and angry eyes. “He may marry the dairy-maid if he likes. I suppose the young gentleman has a right to his own tastes. But I say he shall not bring his low acquaintances about this house while I am alive.”

Mrs. Graham herself had a touch of a family temper, and for a second or two her face turned quite pale with anger, and when she spoke it was in a kind of forced and breathless way.

“I don't know what you mean. Who are low acquaintances? Yolande Winterbourne is my friend. She is fit to marry any one in the land, I care not what his rank is, and—and I will not have such things said. She is my friend. Low acquaintances! If it comes to that, it was I who introduced Archie to Mr. Winterbourne; and—and this is what I know about them, that if they are not fit to—to be received at Lynn, then neither am I.”

And with that she walked calmly (but still with her face rather pale) out of the room, and shut the door behind her; and then went away and sought out her own dressing-room of former days, and locked herself in there and had a good cry. She did feel injured. She was doing her best, and this was what she got for it. But she was a courageous

little woman, and presently she had dried her eyes and arranged her dress for going out; then she rang, and sent a message to the stables to get the dog-cart ready, for that she wanted to drive to Allt-nam-Ba.

By-and-by she was driving along by the side of the pretty loch under the great hills; and she was comforting herself with more cheerful reflections.

"It is no matter," she was saying to herself. "If only Mr. Winterbourne remains in good humor, everything will go right. When Archie is married he will be rich enough to have a home where he pleases. I suppose Jim wouldn't have them always with us?—though it would be nice to have Yolande in the house, especially in the long winter months. But Archie could build a house for himself, and sell it when he no longer wanted it. The country about Loch Eil would please Yolande. I wonder if Archie could get a piece of land anywhere near Fassiefern? That would be handy for having a yacht, too, and of course they will have a yacht. Or why shouldn't he merely rent a house—one of those up Glen Urquhart, if only the shooting was a little better? or over Glen Spean way, if Lochaber isn't a little too wild for Yolande? or perhaps they might get a place in Glengarry, for Yolande is so fond of wandering through woods. No doubt Archie exaggerated that affair about Yolande's mother; in any case it could easily be arranged; other families have done so, and everything gone on as usual. Then if they had a town house we might all go to the Caledonian Ball together. Archie looks so well in the kilt, and Yolande might go as Flora Macdonald."

She drove quickly along the loch-side, but moderated her pace when she reached the rough mountain-road leading up the glen, for she knew she would not mend matters by letting down one of her father's horses. And as she approached Allt-nam-Ba a chill struck her heart—those preparations for departure were so ominous. Duncan was in front of the body, giving the rifles and guns their last rub with oil before putting them into the case; boxes of empty soda-water bottles had been hauled out by the women-folk for the men to screw up; a cart with its shafts resting on the ground stood outside the coach-house; and various figures went hurrying this way and that. And no sooner had Mrs. Graham driven up and got down from the dog-cart than her quick eye espied a tall black-bearded man, who, from natural shyness—or perhaps he wanted to have a look

at Duncan's gun-rack—had retreated into the bothy; and so, instead of going into the house, she quickly followed him into the wide, low-roofed apartment, which smelled considerably of tobacco smoke.

"Isn't your name Angus?" said she.

"Yes, ma'am," said he, with a very large smile that showed he recognized her.

"I suppose Mr. Macpherson has sent you about the inventory?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Have you been over the house yet?"

"No, ma'am; I have just come out with the empty cart from, Inverfariguig."

"Well, then, Angus, you need not go over the house. I don't want the gentlemen bothered. Go back and tell Mr. Macpherson I said so."

"There was £7 of breakages with the last tenant, ma'am," said he, very respectfully.

"Never mind," said she; and she took out her purse and got hold of a sovereign. "Go back at once; and if you have to sleep at Whitebridge that will pay the cost; or you may get a lift in the mail-cart. My brother is in Inverness, isn't he?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Then you can go to him, and tell him I said there was to be no going over the inventory. This tenant is a friend of mine. You go to my brother when you get to Inverness, and he will explain to Mr. Macpherson. Now good-by, Angus;" and she shook hands with him, as is the custom in that part of the country, and went.

The arrival a stranger at Allt-nam-Ba was such an unusual circumstance that when she went up to door of the lodge she found both Mr. Winterbourne and John Shortlands awaiting her, they having seen her drive up the glen; and she explained that she had been leaving a message with one of the men.

"I heard you were leaving, Mr. Winterbourne," said she, with one of her most charming smiles, when they had got into the drawing room, "and I could not let you go away without coming to say good-by. Both my husband and I expected to have seen much more of you this autumn; but you can see for yourself what it is in the Highlands—every household is so wrapped up in its own affairs that there is scarcely any time for visiting. If Inverstroy

had come to Allt-nam-Ba, Inverstry would have found Allt-nam-Ba away shooting on the hill, and *vice versa!* and I suppose that is why old-fashioned people like my father have almost given up the tradition of visiting. When do you go?"

"Well, if we are all packed and ready, I suppose this afternoon; then we can pass the night at Foyers, and go on to Inverness in the morning."

"But if I had known I could have brought some of the people from the Towers to help you. My father would have been delighted."

"She said it without a blush; perhaps it was only a slip of the tongue.

"Do you think Mrs. Bell would suffer any interference?" said John Shortlands, with a laugh. "I can tell you, my dear Mrs. Graham, that she rules us with a rod of iron—though we're not supposed to know it."

"And how is dear Yolande?" said Mrs. Graham.

"She is very well," Yolande's father said, instantly lowering his eyes, and becoming nervous and fidgety.

"I heard something of what had called her away to the south—at least I presumed that was the reason," continued Mrs. Graham, forcing herself to attack this dangerous topic in order to show that, in her estimation at least nothing too important had occurred. "Of course one sympathizes with her. I hope you have had good news from her?"

"Oh yes," said he hastily. "Oh yes. I had a letter last night. Yolande is very well."

"Archie," continued Mrs. Graham, thinking enough had been said on that point, "is at Inverness. I declare the way those lawyers fight over trifles is perfectly absurd. And I confess," she added, with a demure smile, "that the owners of deer forests are not much better. Of course they always tell me I don't know, that it is my ignorance; but to find people quarrelling about the line the march should take—when an acre of the ground wouldn't give grazing for a sheep—seems stupid enough. Well, now, Mr. Winterbourne, may I venture to ask how you found the shooting?"

"Oh, excellent—excellent," said he, brightly, for he also was glad to get away from that other topic. "We have not found as many deer coming about as we expected; but

otherwise the place has turned out everything that could be wished."

"I am glad of that," said she, "for I know Archie had qualms about inducing you to take the shooting. I remember very well, on board ship, he used to think it was a risky thing. Supposing the place had *not* turned out well, then you might have felt that—that—"

"No, no, my dear Mrs. Graham," said he, with a smile, "*caveat emptor*. I knew I was taking the place with the usual attending risks; I should not have blamed your brother if we had had a bad year."

She was just on the point of asking him whether he liked Alt-nam-Ba well enough to come back again, but she thought it was too dangerous. She had no means of knowing what he thought of Lord Lynn's marked unneighborliness; and she deemed it more prudent to go on talking of general subjects, in her light and cheerful way, and always on the assumption that two families were on friendly terms, and that Yolande's future home would be in the Highlands. At length she said must be going.

"I would ask you to stay to lunch," said Mr. Winterbourne, "but I dare say you know what lunch is likely to be on the day of leaving a shooting-box—"

"Dear me!" said she, in tones of vexation.

"Why did they not think of that at the Towers? They might have saved you a great deal of bother that way; but they have got into an old fashioned groove there."

"At the same time, my dear Mrs. Graham," said Mr. Winterbourne, with great courtesy, "if you like to take the risk, I dare say Mrs. Bell can find you something; and we have not often the chance of entertaining any one at Alt-nam-Ba. Will you take pity on us? Will you sit in Yolande's place? The house has been rather empty since she left."

"I should like it of all things," said pretty Mrs. Graham, taking off her hat and gloves and putting them on the sofa, "for I feel that I haven't given you half the messages I wish you to take to dear Yolande. And you must let me have her address, so that Jim can send her a haunch of venison at Christmas."

"I am afraid that would not be of much use, thank you," said he; "for I hope by that time, if all goes well, that Yolande will be away in the south of Europe."

"Archie is going south also," said Mrs. Graham pleas-

antly. "There is little doing here in the winter. After he has made all the arrangements with papa's agents in Inverness, then he will be off to the south too. Where is Yolande likely to be?"

"Well I don't exactly know," said Mr. Winterbourne, with a kind of anxious evasion. "But she will write to you. Oh yes, I will tell her to write to you. She is—she is much occupied at present—and—and perhaps she has not much time. But Yolande does not forget her friends."

"She shall not forget me for I won't let her," said Mrs. Graham, blithely. "If she should try, I will come and ferret her out, and give her a proper scolding. But I don't think it will be needed."

The luncheon, frugal as it was, proved to be a very pleasant affair, for the two men-folk were glad to have the table brightened by the unusual presence of a lady guest, who was, moreover, very pretty and talkative and cheerful; while on the other hand, Mrs. Graham, having all her wits about her, very speedily assured herself that Yolande's father was leaving Allt-nam-Ba in no dudgeon whatever; and also that, although he seemed to consider Yolande as at present set apart for some special duty, and not to be interfered with by any suggestions of future meetings or arrangements, he appeared to take it for granted that ultimately she would live in the Highlands. Mrs. Graham convinced herself that all was well, and she was a skilful flatterer, and could use her eyes; and altogether this was a very merry and agreeable luncheon party. Before she finally rose to go she had got Yolande's address, and had undertaken to write to her.

And then she pleased Mr. Winterbourne very much by asking to see Mrs. Bell; and she equally pleased Mrs. Bell by some cleverly turned compliments, and by repeating what the gentlemen had said about their obligations to her. In good truth Mrs. Bell needed some such comfort. She was sadly broken down. When Mrs. Graham asked her about Mr. Melville, tears rose unbidden to the old dame's eyes, and she had furtively to wipe them away with her handkerchief while pretending to look out of the window.

"He has written two or three times to the young lad Dalrymple," said she, with just one suppressed sob; "and all about they brats o' bairns, as if he wasna in mair consideration in people's minds than a when useless lads and lassies. And only a message or two to me, about this family or the other family—the deil take them, that he

should bother his head about their crofts and their cows and their seed-corn! And just as he might be having his ain back again—to gang awa' like that, without a word o' an address. I jalouse it's America—ay, I'm thinking it's America, for there they have the electric things he was aye speaking o'; and he was a curious man, that wanted to ken everything. I wonder what the Almichty was about when He put it into people's heads to get fire out o' running water! They might hae been content as they were; and Mr. Melville would hae been better occupit in planting his ain hill-sides—as a' the lairds are doing nowadays—than in running frae ae American town to anither wi' his boxes o' steel springs and things."

"But he is sure to write to you, Mrs. Bell," said Mrs. Graham.

"I just canna bear to think o't," said the older woman, in a kind of despair. "I hope he didna leave because he thought I would be an encumbrance on him. I hae mair sense than that. But he's a proud man, though I shouldna say it— Ay, and the poor lad without a home—and without the land that belongs to him—"

The good old lady found this topic too much for her, and she was retiring with an old-fashioned courtesy, when Mrs. Graham shook hands with her in the most friendly manner; and assured her that if any tidings of Mr. Melville came to Inverstroy (as was almost certain), she would write at once.

CHAPTER XLIII.

LOOSENEED CHAINS.

"*You have done well—you will succeed.*" Yolande read and again read that brief note; pondering over it in secret, and always with an increasing joy. He had seen; he had approved. And now, when she was walking about the streets of Worthing with her mother, she found a strange interest in guessing as to which of those houses he had lived in while, as she assured herself, he was keeping that invisible guard over her. Was it this one, or that; or perhaps the

hotel at the corner? Had he been standing at the window there, and regarding her as she passed unconscious? Had he seen her drive by in the little pony-carriage? Had he watched her go along the pier, himself standing somewhere out of the way? She had no longer any doubt that it was he who had gone to the office of Lawrence Lang on the morning of her arrival in London; she was certain he must have been close by when she went to fetch her mother on that fateful evening.

And indeed, as time went on, it became more and more certain that that forgetfulness to which she had looked forward was still far from her; and now she began to regard with a kind of dismay the prospect of the Master of Lynn coming to claim her. She knew it was her duty to become his wife—that had been arranged and approved by her father; she had herself pledged away her future; and she had no right of appeal. She reminded herself of these facts a hundred times, and argued with herself; she strove to banish those imaginings about one who ought henceforth to be as one dead to her; and strove also to prove to herself that if she did what was right, unhappiness could not be the result; but all the time there was growing up in her heart a fear—nay, almost a conviction—that this marriage was not possible. She turned away her eyes and would not regard it; but this conviction pressed itself in on her whether she would or no. And then she would engage herself with a desperate assiduity in the trivial details of their daily life there, and try to gain forgetfulness that way.

This was the letter she wrote to the Master of Lynn, in reply to his. It cost her some trouble, and also here and there some qualm of self-reproach; for she could not but know that she was not telling the whole truth:

“WORTHING, *Wednesday afternoon.*

“DEAR ARCHIE,—I am exceedingly grieved to hear of your trouble with your family, and also to think that I am the cause of it. It seems so great a pity, and all the more that, in the present circumstances, it is so unnecessary. You will understand from my papa’s letter that the duty I have undertaken is surely before any other; and that one’s personal wishes must be put aside, when it is a question of what a daughter owes to her mother. And to think there should be trouble and dissension now over what must in any case

be so remote—that seems a very painful and unnecessary thing; and surely, dear Archie, you can do something to restore yourself to your ordinary position with regard to your family. Do you think it is pleasant to me to think that I am the cause of a quarrel? And to think also that this quarrel might be continued in the future? But the future is so uncertain now in these new circumstances that I would pray you not to think of it, but to leave it aside, and become good friends with your family. And how, you may ask? Well, I would consider our engagement at an end for the present; let it be as nothing; you will go back to Lynn; I am here, in the position that I can not go from; let the future have what it may in store, it will be time to consider afterwards. Pray believe me, dear Archie, it is not in anger that I write, or any resentment; for I understand well that my papa's politics are not agreeable to every one; and I have heard of differences in families on smaller matters than that. And I pray you to believe that neither my father nor myself was sensible of any discourtesy—no, surely every one has the right to choose his friends as he pleases; nor could one expect one's neighbors to alter their habits of living, perhaps, and be at the trouble of entertaining strangers. No, there is neither resentment nor anger in my mind; but only a wish that you should be reconciled to your friends; and this is an easy way. It would leave you and me free for the time that might be necessary; you can go back to Lynn, where your proper place is; and I can give myself up to my mother, without other thoughts. Will you ask Mrs. Graham if that is not the wisest plan?—I am sure she must be distressed at the thought of your being estranged from your relatives; and I know she will think it a pity to have so much trouble about what must in any case be so distant. For, to tell you the truth, dear Archie, I can not leave to any one else what I have now undertaken; and it may be years of attention and service that are wanted; and why should you wait and wait, and always with the constraint of a family quarrel around you? For myself, I already look at my position that way. I have put aside my engagement ring. I have given myself over to the one who has most claims on me; and I am proud to think that I may have been of a little service already. Will you consent, dear Archie? Then we shall both be free; and the future must be left to itself.

“It was so very kind of you to look after the sending

away of the dogs and ponies from Allt-nam-Ba! my papa has written to me from Dalescroft about it; and was very grateful to you. No, I will not tell him anything of what is in your letter; for it is not necessary it should be known—especially as I hope you will at once take steps for a reconciliation and think no more of it. And it was very good of your sister to go out and pay them a visit at Allt-nam-Ba. I have had a letter from her also—as kind as she always is—asking me to go to Inverstroy at Christmas; but you will understand from what I have said that this is impossible, nor can I make any engagement with any one now, nor have I any desire to do so. I am satisfied to be as I am—also, I rejoice to think that I have the opportunity; I wish for nothing more except to hear that you have agreed to my suggestion and gone back to Lynn. As for my mother and myself, we shall perhaps go to the south of France when she is a little stronger; but at present she is too weak to travel; and happily we find ourselves very well content with this place, now that we are familiar with it, and have found out different ways of passing the time. It is not so wild and beautiful as Allt-nam-Ba, but it is a cheerful place for an invalid: we have a pretty balcony, from which we can look at the people on the promenade, and the sea, and the ships; and we have a pony-carriage for the country roads, and have driven almost everywhere in the neighborhood.

“So now I will say good-by, dear Archie; and I hope you will consider my proposal; and see that it is wise. What may occur in the future, who can tell?—but in the meantime let us do what is best for those around us; and I think this is the right way. I should feel far happier if I knew that you were not wondering when this service that I owe to my mother were to end; and also I should feel far happier to know that I was no longer the cause of disagreement and unhappiness in your family. Give my love to your sister when you see her; and if you hear anything about the Gress people, I should be glad to hear some news about them also.

“Believe me, yours affectionately,

“YOLANDE.”

She looked at this letter for a long time before putting it into an envelope and addressing it; and when she posted it, it was with a guilty conscience. So far as it went, she

had told the truth. This duty she owed to her mother was paramount ; and she knew not for how long it might be demanded of her. And no doubt she would feel freer and more content in her mind if her engagement were broken off—if she had no longer to fear that he might be becoming impatient over the renewed waiting and waiting. But that was only part of the truth. She could not blind herself to the fact that this letter was very little more than a skillful piece of prevarication ; and this consciousness haunted her, and troubled her, and shamed her. She grew uneasy. Her mother noticed that the girl seemed anxious and distraught, and questioned her ; but Yolande answered evasively. She did not think it worth while to burden her mother's mind with her private inquietudes.

No, she had not been true to herself ; and she knew it ; and the knowledge brought shame to her cheeks when she was alone. With a conscience ill at ease, the cheerfulness with which she set about her ordinary task of keeping her mother employed and amused was just a little bit forced ; and despite herself she fell into continual reveries—thinking of the arrival of the letter, of his opening it, of his possible conjectures about it. Then, besides these smitings of conscience, there was another thing: would he consider the reason she had advanced for breaking off the engagement as sufficient ? Would he not declare himself willing to wait ? The tone of his letter had been firm enough. He was unmoved by this opposition on the part of his own people ; it was not to gain any release that he had written to her. And now might he not still adhere to his resolution—refusing to make up the quarrel ; resolved to wait Yolande's good pleasure ; and so, in effect, requiring of her the fulfilment of her plighted troth ?

It would be difficult to say which was the stronger motive—the shamed consciousness that she had not spoken honestly, or the ever-increasing fear that, after all, she might not be able to free herself from this impossible bond ; but at all events she determined to supplement that letter with a franker one. Indeed, she stole out that same evening, under some pretence or other, and went to the post-office and sent off this telegram to him :

“Letter posted to you this afternoon : do not answer it until you get the following.” Then she went back to the rooms quickly, her heart somewhat lighter, though, indeed, all during dinner she was puzzling to decide what she

should say, and how to make her confession not too humiliating. She did not wish him to think too badly of her. Was it not possible for them to part friends? Or would he be angry, and call her "jilt," "light o' love," and so forth, as she had called herself? Indeed, she had reproached herself enough; anything that he could say would be nothing new to her. Only she hoped—for she had had a gentle kind of regard for him, and he had been mixed up in her imaginings of the future, and they had spent happy days and evenings together, on board ship or in the small lodge between the streams—that they might part friends, without angry words.

"Yolande there is something troubling you," her mother said, as they sat at table.

She had been watching the girl in her sad, tender way. As soon as she had spoken Yolande instantly pulled herself together.

"Why, yes, there is indeed!" she said. "Shall I tell you what it is mother? I have been thinking that soon we shall be as tired of pheasants as we were of grouse and hares. Papa sends us far too many; or rather it is Mr. Shortlands now; and I don't know what to do with them—unless somebody in the town would exchange them. Is it possible? Would not that be an occupation, now—to sit in a poulterer's shop and say, 'I will give you three brace of pheasants for so many of this and so many of that?'"

"You wrote a long letter this afternoon," the mother said, absently. "Was it to Mr. Shortlands?"

"Oh no," Yolande said, with a trifle of color in her face. "It was to the Master of Lynn. I have often told you about him, mother. And one thing I quite forgot. I forgot to ask him to inquire of Mrs. Bell where the ballad of 'Young Randal' is to be found—you remember I told you the story? No, there is nothing of it in the stupid book I got yesterday—no, nor any story like it, except, perhaps, one where a Lord Lovat of former times comes home from Palestine and asks for May Maisrey.

'And bonnier than them a'
May Maisrey, where is she?'

It is a pretty name, is it not mother? But I think I must write to Mrs. Bell to send me the words of 'Young Randal,' if it is not to be found in a book."

"I wish you would go away to your friends now, Yolande," the mother said, regarding her in that sad and affectionate way.

"That is so very likely!" she answered, with much cheerfulness.

"You ought to go, Yolande. Why should you remain here? Why should you be shut up here—away from all your friends? You have done what you came for—I feel that now—you need not fear to leave me alone now—to leave me in these same lodgings. I can stay here very well, and amuse myself with books and with looking at the people passing. I should not be dull. I like the rooms. I should find amusement enough."

"And where am I to go, then?" the girl said, calmly.

"To your friends—to all those people you have told me about. That is the proper kind of life for you, at your age—not shut up in lodgings. The lady in the Highlands, for example, who wants you to spend Christmas there."

"Well, now, dear mother," said Yolande, promptly, "I will not show you another one of my letters if you take the nonsense in them as if it were serious. Christmas, indeed! Why, do you know where we shall be at Christmas? Well, then, at Monte Carlo? No, mother, you need not look forward to the tables; I will not permit any such wickedness, though I have staked more than once—or, rather, papa staked for me—five-franc pieces, and always I won—for as soon as I had won five francs I came away to make sure. But we shall not go to the tables; there is enough without that. There are beautiful drives; and you can walk through the gardens and down the terraces until you get a boat to go out on the blue water. Then, the other side you take a carriage and drive up to the little town, and by the sea there are more beautiful gardens. And at Monte Carlo I know an excellent hotel, with fine views; and always there is excellent music. And—and you think I am going to spend Christmas in a Highland glen! *Grazie alla bonta sua!*"

"It is too much of a sacrifice. You must leave me to myself—I can do very well by myself now," the mother said, looking at the girl with wistful eyes. "I should be happy enough only to hear of you. I should like to hear of your being married, Yolande."

"I am not likely to be married to any one," said she, with averted eyes and burning forehead. "Do not speak

of it, mother. My place is by you; and here I remain—until you turn me away.”

That same night she wrote the letter which was to supplement the former one and free her conscience:

“DEAR ARCHIE,—In the letter I sent you this afternoon I was not quite frank with you; and I can not rest until I tell you so. There are other reasons besides those I mentioned why I think our engagement should be broken off now; and also, for I wish to be quite honest, and to throw myself on your generosity and forbearance, why I think that we ought not to look forward to the marriage that was thought of. Perhaps you will ask me what these reasons are—and you have the right; and in that case I will tell you. But perhaps you will be kind, and not ask; and I should never forget your kindness. When I promised to marry you, I thought that the friendliness and affection that prevailed between us was enough; I did not imagine anything else; you must think of how I was brought up, with scarcely any women friends except the ladies at the chateau, who were very severe as to the duty of children to their parents, and when I learned that my papa approved my marrying you, it was sufficient for me. But now I think not. I do not think I should bring you happiness. There ought to be no regret on the marriage-day—no thoughts of going away elsewhere. You have the right to be angry with me, because I have been careless, and allowed myself to become affectionate to some one else without my knowing it; but it was not with intention; and now that I know, should I be doing right in allowing our engagement to continue? Yes, you have the right to upbraid me; but you can not think worse of me than I think of myself; and perhaps it is well that the mistake was soon found out, before harm was done. As for me, my path is clear. All that I said in the other letter as to the immediate future, and I hope the distant future also, is true; you have only to look at this other explanation to know exactly how I am situated. I welcome my position and its duties—they drive away sometimes sad thinking and regret over what has happened. You were always very kind and considerate to me; you deserved that I kept my faith to you more strictly; and if I were to see your sister, what should I say? Only that I am sorry that I can make no more amends; and to beg for your forgiveness and for hers. And perhaps it is better as

it is for all of us. My way is clear. I must be with my mother. Perhaps, some day, if our engagement had continued, I might have been tempted to repine. I hope not; but I have no longer such faith in myself. But now you are free from the impatience of waiting; and I—I go my own way, and am all the more certain to give all my devotion where it is needed. I would pray you not to think too harshly of me, only I know that I have not the right to ask; and I should like to part friends with you, if only for the sake of the memories that one treasures. My letter is ill-expressed—that I am sure it must be; but perhaps you will guess at anything I should have said and have not said; and believe that I could stretch out my hands to you to beg for your forgiveness, and for gentle thoughts of me in the future, after some years have given us time to look back. I do not think little of any kindness that has been shown to me; and I shall remember your kindness to me always; and also your sister's; and the kindness of every one, as it seemed to me, whom I met in the Highlands. I have made this confession to you without consulting any one; for it is a matter only between you and me; and I do not know how you will receive it; only that I pray you once more for your forgiveness, and not to think too harshly, but, if you have such gentleness and commiseration, to let us remain friends, and to think of each other in the future as not altogether strangers. I know it is much that I ask, and that you have the right to refuse; but I shall look for your letter with the remembrance of your kindness in the past.

YOLANDE."

It was a piteous kind of letter; for she felt very solitary and unguided in this crisis; moreover, it was rather hard to fight through this thing, and preserve at the same time an appearance of absolute cheerfulness, so long as her mother was in the room. But she got it done; and Jane was sent out to the post-office; and thereafter Yolande—with something of trial and trouble in her eyes, perhaps, but otherwise with a brave face—fetched down some volumes from the little book-case, and asked her mother what she wanted to have read.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE HOUR OF VENGEANCE.

THE Master of Lynn had spent the whole of the morning in arranging affairs with his father's agent; and when he left Mr. Ronald Macpherson's office he knew that he had now all the world to choose from. He was anxious to get away from this dawdling life in Inverness; but, on the other hand, he was not going back to Lynn. He still felt angry and indignant; he considered he had been badly used; and it is far from improbable that if, at this moment, Yolande had been differently situated, and if Mr. Winterbourne had been likely to give his consent, he, the Master, would now have proposed an immediate marriage, leaving his father and aunt to do or think as they pleased. But, in the present circumstances, that was impossible; and he did not know well which way to turn; and had generally got himself into an unsettled, impatient, irritable condition, which boded no good either for himself or for them who had thwarted him.

He returned to the Station Hotel, and was having lunch by himself in the large and almost empty dining-room, when two letters were brought him which had doubtless arrived by that morning's mail. As he was thinking of many things, it did not occur to him to look at both addresses and decide which letter should have precedence; he mechanically opened and read the first that came to hand:

ST. JAMES'S CLUB, PICCADILLY, *October 31.*

"DEAR LESLIE,—Are you game for a cruise? I will go where you like; and start any day you like. I have never taken the *Juliet* across the Atlantic—what do you say? The worst of it is, there ain't much to see when you get there; but we should have some fun going over and coming back. Drop me a line. She is at Plymouth, and could be got ready in a week.

"Yours ever,

DAERTOWN."

"Now, to have a three-hundred-ton steam-yacht put at your disposal is an agreeable kind of thing; but there were

other circumstances in this case. Lord Dartown was a young Irish peer who had inherited an illustrious name, large estates (fortunately for him, some of them were in England), and a sufficiency of good looks; but who, on the other hand, seemed determined to bid a speedy farewell to all of these by means of incessant drinking. His friends regarded him with much interest, for he was doing it on dry champagne; and as that is a most unusual circumstance—champagne being somewhat too much of child's play for the serious drinker—they looked on and wondered how long it would last, and repeated incredible stories as to the number of bottles this youth could consume from the moment of his awaking in his berth until his falling asleep in the same. The *Juliet* was an exceedingly well-appointed vessel; the cook had a reputation that a poet might envy; but the habits of the owner were peculiar, and most frequently he had to make his cruises alone. But he had always had a great respect for the Master of Lynn, who was his senior by a year or two, when they were school-fellows together; and sometimes in later years a kind of involuntary admiration for the firm nerve and hardened frame of his deer-stalking friend would lead to a temporary fit of reformation, and he would even take to practising with dumb-bells, which his trembling muscles could scarcely hold out at arm's-length.

“Owley must be off his head altogether this time,” the Master of Lynn coolly said to himself, as he regarded the shaky handwriting of the letter. “To think of facing the ‘rolling forties’ at this time of year! We should die of cold besides. Not good enough, Owley: you must throw a fly over somebody else.”

So he put that letter aside, and took up the other. It was the second one of the two that Yolande had sent him; he had got its predecessor on the previous day. And now, as he read this final declaration and confession, it was with an ever-increasing surprise; but it certainly was with no sense of dismay or disappointment, or even the resentment of wounded vanity. He did not even, at this moment heed the piteous appeal for charity and kindness; it was not of her he was thinking, and scarcely of himself; it was rather of the people at Lynn,

“Now I will show them what they have done!” he was saying to himself, with a kind of triumph. “They shall see what they have done, and I hope they will be sat-

ified. As for me, I am going my own way after this. I have had enough of it. Polly may scheme as she likes and they may rage, or refuse, or go to the deuce, if they like; I am going to look after myself now."

He picked up the other letter, and took both with him into the writing-room; he had forgotten that he had left his lunch but half finished. And there he read Yolande's appeal to him with more care; and he was touched by the penitence and the simplicity, and the eager wish for friendliness in it; and he determined, as he sat down at the writing-table, that, as far as he had command of the English language, she should have safe assurance that they were to part on kindly terms. Indeed, as it turned out, this was the most affectionate letter he had ever sent her; and it might have been said of him, with regard to this engagement, that nothing in it so well became him as his manner of leaving it:

"MY DEAREST YOLANDE," he wrote,—“I am inexpressibly grieved that you should have given yourself the pain to write such a letter; and you might have known that whenever you wished our engagement to cease I should consider you had the right to say so, and so far from accusing you or doing anything in the tragedy line, I should beg to be allowed to remain always your friend. And it won't take any length of time for me to be on quite friendly terms with you—if you will let me; for I am so now; and if I saw you to-morrow I should be glad of your companionship for as long as you chose to give it me; and I don't at all think it impossible that we may have many another stroll along the streets of Inverness, when you come back to the Highlands, as you are sure to do. Of course I am quite sensible of what I have lost—you can't expect me to be otherwise; and I dare say if all the circumstances had been propitious, and if we had married, we should have got on very well together—for when Polly attributes everything that happens to my temper, that is merely because she is in the wrong, and can't find any other excuse; whereas, if you and I had got married, I fancy we should have agreed very well, so long as no one interfered. But, to tell you the honest truth, my dear Yolande, I never did think you were very anxious about it; you seemed to regard our engagement as a very light matter—or as something that would please everybody all round; and though I trusted

that the future would right all that—I mean that we should become more intimate and affectionate—still, there would have been a risk ; and it is only common-sense to regard these things now as some consolation, and as some reason why, if you say, “Let us break off this engagement,” I should say, “Very well ; but let us continue our friendship.”

“But there is a tremendous favor I would beg and entreat of you, dearest Yolande ; and you always had the most generous disposition—I never knew you to refuse anybody anything (I do believe that was why you got engaged to me—because you thought it would please the Grahams and all the rest of us). I do hope that you will consent to keep the people at Lynn in ignorance—they could only know through Polly, and you could keep it back from her—as to who it was, or why it was, that our engagement was broken off. This is not from vanity ; I think you will say I haven’t shown much of that sort of distemper. It is merely that I may have the whip-hand of the Lynn people. They have used me badly ; and I mean to take care that they don’t serve me so again ; and if they imagine that our engagement had been broken off solely, or even partly, through their opposition, that will be a weapon for me in the future. And then the grounds of their opposition—that they or their friends might have to associate with one professing such opinions as those your father owns ! You may rest assured, dearest Yolande, that I did not put you forward and make any appeal ; and equally I knew you would resent my making any apology for your father, or allowing that any consideration on their part was demanded. It’s no use reasoning with raving maniacs ; I retired. But I mention this once more as an additional reason why, if our engagement is to be broken off, we should make up our minds to look on the best side of affairs, and to part on the best of terms ; for I must confess more frankly to you now that there would have been some annoyance, and you would naturally have been angry on account of your father, and I should have taken your side, and there would simply have been a series of elegant family squabbles.

“There are one or two other points in your letter that I don’t touch on ; except to say that I hope you will write to me again—and *soon* ; and that you will write in a very different tone. I hope you will see that many things justify you in so doing ; and I hope I have made this letter as

plain as can be. I have kept back nothing; so you needn't be reading between the lines. If you have no time to write a letter, send me a few words to show that you are in a more cheerful mood. If you don't I shouldn't wonder if I broke through all social observances, and presented myself at your door—to convince you that you have done quite right, and that everything is well, and that you have given me a capital means of having it out with the Lynn people when the proper times comes. So please let me have a few lines; and in the meantime I hope I may be allowed to sign myself.

“Yours, most affectionately,

A. LESLIE.

“P.S.—Do you remember my telling you of the small youth who was my fag—the cheeky young party who was always smuggling champagne and pastry? I may have told you that he is now the owner of a three-hundred-ton yacht? Well, he wants me to go a cruise with him. I had not intended doing so; but it occurs to me that I might do worse—as all my affairs are settled up here; and so, if you can write to me within the next few days, will you please address me at the——Hotel, Jermyn Street?”

Then he wrote :—

INVERNESS, October 31.

“DEAR OWLEY,—It isn't a *compagnon de voyage* you want; it's a straight-waistcoat. You would knock the *Juliet* all to bits if you took her across now; and a fine thing to choose winter for a visit to New York, where the weather is cold enough to freeze the ears off a brass monkey. This letter will reach London same time as myself; so you can look me up at——Hotel, Jermyn Street; and I'll talk to you like a father about it. My notion is you should send the *Juliet* to Gib., and we could make our way down through Spain; or, if that is too tedious for your lordship, send her to Marseilles, and then we could fill up the intervening time in Paris. I have never been to Venice in a yacht; and don't remember whether you can get near enough to Danieli's to make it handy; but I suppose, even if you have to lie down by the Giudecca, there would be no difficulty about getting people to a dance on board? I'll see you through it.

Yours,

A. LESLIE.

her why her proposal, instead of bringing him disappointment, was rather welcome, as offering him a means of vengeance for the annoyance he had been subjected to. She knew nothing of Shena Van. She knew nothing of the proposal to complete the Lynn deer forest. So he began to think that his letter, breaking off the engagement so very willingly, might not wholly please her; and as he was well disposed toward Yolande at that moment, and honestly desiring that they should part the best of friends, he slowly walked back to the hotel, composing a few more sentences by the way, so that her womanly pride should not be wounded.

But it was a difficult matter. He went upstairs to his room, and packed his things for the journey to London, while thinking over what he would say to her. And it was very near dinner-time before he had finished this addendum to his previous letter :

“MY DEAREST YOLANDE,” he wrote,—“I want to say something more to you; if you get the two letters together, read this one second. Perhaps you may think, from what I said in the other, that I did not sufficiently value the prospect that was before me at one time, or else I should say something more about losing it. I am afraid you may think I have given you up too easily and lightly; but you would make a great mistake if you think I don't know what I have lost. Only I did not want to make it too grave a matter; your letter was very serious, and I want you to think, that there is no reason why we should not continue on quite friendly and intimate terms. Of course I know what I have lost; I wasn't so long in your society—on board ship, and in the dahabeeyah, too, and at Allt-nam-Ba—without seeing how generous you were, and sincere and anxious to make every one around you happy; and if it comes to that, and if you will let me say it, a man naturally looks forward with some pride to having always him a wife who can hold her own with everybody in regard to personal appearance, and grace and finish of manner, and accomplishments. Of course I know what I have lost. I am not blind. I always looked forward to seeing you and Polly together at the ball at the Northern Meeting. But when you say it is impossible, and seem put out about it, naturally I tried to find out reasons for looking at the best side of the matter. It is the wisest way. When you miss a bird it is of no use saying, ‘Confound it, I have missed;”

it is much better to say, 'Thank goodness I didn't go near it; it won't go away wounded.' And, quite apart from anything you said in your letter of to-day, there was enough in your letter of yesterday to warrant us both in consenting to break off the engagement, Circumstances were against it on both sides. Of course I would have gone on—as I wrote to you. A man can't be such a cur as to break his word to his promised wife simply because his relatives are ill-tempered—at least, if, I came across such a gentleman he wouldn't very long be any acquaintance of mine. But there would have been trouble and family squabbles, as I say, if not a complete family separation—which could not be pleasant to a young wife; and then, on your side, there is this duty to your mother, which was not contemplated when we were engaged; and so, when we consider everything, perhaps it is better as it is. I dare say, if we had married, we should have been as contented as most people; and I should have been very proud of you as my wife, naturally; but it is no use speculating on what might have been. It is very fortunate, when an engagement is broken off, if not a particle of blame attaches to either side: and in that way we should consider ourselves lucky, as giving no handle for any ill-natured gossip.

"Of course Polly will be cut up about it. She always had an extraordinary affection for you; and looked forward to your being her sister. Graham will be disappointed too; you were always *very highly valued* in that quarter. But if you and I are of one mind that the decision we have come to is a wise one, it is our business, and no one else's."

He stopped and read over again those last sentences.

"I consider, now," he was saying to himself, "that that is a friendly touch—No blame attaching to either side: that will please her; she always was very sensitive, and pleased to be thought well of."

"And even," he continued, "if I should get reconciled to my people (about which I am in no hurry), Lynn will seem a lonely place after this autumn; and I suppose I shall conceive a profound detestation for next year's tenant of Allt-nam-Ba. Probably two or three bachelor fellows will have the Lodge; and it will be pipes and brandy-and-soda and limited loo in the evening; they won't know that there was once a fairy living in that glen. But I don't despair of seeing you again in the Highlands, and your father too; and, as they say the subject of deer forests is to be brought

before the House, he will now be in a position to talk a little common-sense to them about that subject. Did you see that the chief agitator on this matter has just been caught speaking about the grouse and red-deer of Iona? Now I will undertake to eat all the red-deer and all the grouse he can find in Iona at one meal; and I'll give him three months for the search."

He thought this was very cleverly introduced. It was to give her the impression that they could now write to each other indifferently on the subjects of the day—in short, that they were on terms of ordinary and pleasant friendship.

"But I dare say you will consider me prejudiced—for I have been brought up from my infancy, almost, with a rifle in my hand; and so I will end this scrawl, again asking from you a few lines just to show that we are friends as before, and as I hope we shall ever remain.

"Yours, most affectionately,
ARCHIE LESLIE."

It was a clever letter, he considered. The little touches of flattery; the business-like references to the topics of the day; the frank appeals to her old friendship—these would not be in vain. And so he went in to his dinner with a light heart, and the same night went comfortably to sleep in a saloon-carriage bound for London.

CHAPTER XLV.

A PERILOUS SITUATION.

THE Master of Lynn, however, was not destined to get to London without an adventure—an adventure, moreover, that was very near ending seriously. Most people who have travelled in the north will remember that the night train from Inverness stops for a considerable time, in the morning, at Perth, before setting out again for the south; and this break in the journey is welcome enough to passengers who wish to have the stains of travel washed from their hands and faces, to get their breakfast in peace and comfort, and have their choice of the morning newspapers. The Master of Lynn had accomplished these various duties; and now he was idly walking up and down the stone platforms of the wide-resounding station, smoking a cigarette. He was in a contented frame of mind. There had been too much trouble of late up there in the north; and he hated trouble; and he thought he would find the society of "Owley" very tolerable, for "Owley" would leave him alone. He finished his cigarette; had another look at the book-stall; purchased a two-shilling novel that promised something fine, for there was a picture outside of a horse coming to awful grief at a steeplechase, and its rider going through the air like a cannon-ball; and then he strolled back to the compartment he had left, vacantly whistling the while "The Hills of Lynn."

Suddenly he was startled to find a well-known face regarding him. It was Shena Vân; and she was seated in a corner of a second-class carriage. The moment she saw that he had noticed her she averted her eyes, and pretended not to have seen him; but he instantly went to the door of the carriage.

"It isn't possible you are going to London, Miss Stewart?" said he, in great surprise.

"Oh no," said Shena Vân. "I am not going so far as that."

"How far, then?" he asked—for he saw that she was embarrassed, and only wishing to get rid of him, and certainly that she would afford no information that wasn't asked for.

"I am going to Carlisle," said she, not looking at him.

"And alone?"

"Oh yes. But my brother's friends will be waiting for me at the station."

"Oh, you must let me accompany you, though," said he, quickly. "You won't mind?"

He did not give her the chance of refusing; for he had little enough time in which to fetch his things along from the other carriage. Then he had to call the newsboy, and present to Miss Stewart such an assortment of illustrated papers, comic journals, and magazines as might have served for a voyage to Australia. And then the door was shut, the whistle shrieked, and the long, heavy train moved slowly out of the station.

"Well, now," said he, "this is lucky! Who could have expected it? I did not see you at the station last night."

She had seen him, however, though she did not say so.

"I did not even know you were in Inverness; I thought you were at Aberdeen."

"I have been in Aberdeen," said she. "I only went back a day or two ago to get ready for going south."

"I suppose I mustn't ask you what is taking you to Carlisle?—and yet we used to be old friends, you know."

Now Miss Stewart was a little bit annoyed at his thrusting himself on her society, and she was very near answering saucily that it was the train that was taking her south; but a little touch of feminine vanity saved him from that reproof. Shena Vân was rather glad to have the chance of telling him why she was going south.

"It is no great secret," said she. "I am going to stay with the family of the young lady whom my brother will marry before long. It appears that the professorship will be worth a good deal more than we expected—oh yes, indeed, a good deal more—and there is no reason why he should not marry."

"Well, that is good news," said the Master, cheerfully. "And what sort of girl is she? Nice?"

"She is a very well-accomplished young lady," said Shena Vân, with some dignity. "She was two years in Germany at school and two years in France, and she is very well fitted to be a professor's wife, and for the society that comes to my brother's house."

"I hope she's good-looking?"

"As to that," said Miss Stewart, "I should say she was very pretty indeed; but that is of no consequence nowadays."

"Why, what else is!" he exclaimed, boldly.

But this was clearly dangerous ground; and Miss Stewart sought refuge in the pages of *Punch*.

He had time to regard her. He had never seen her look so well. She had made ample use of the clear water supplied at Perth station, and her face was as fresh as the morning, while her pretty, soft light brown hair was carefully brushed and tended. As for her eyes—those strangely dark blue eyes that he could remember in former years brimming over with girlish merriment or grown pensive with imaginative dreams—he could not get a fair glimpse of them at all, for when she spoke she kept them averted or turned down; and at present she devoted them to the study of *Punch*. He began to regret those extensive purchases at the station. He made sure she was at this moment poring over Mr. Du Maurier's drawings—for it is to them that women-folk instinctively turn first; and he grew to be jealous of Mr. Du Maurier, and to wish, indeed, that Mr. Du Maurier had never been born—a wish, one may be certain, then formulated for the first and only time by any inhabitant of these three countries. Moreover, when she had finished with *Punch*, she took up this magazine and that magazine, and this journal and that journal, the while answering his repeated attempts at conversation in a very distant and reserved way, and clearly intimating that she wished to be allowed to prosecute her studies. He hated the sight of those pages. He was ready to devote the whole periodical literature of his country to the infernal gods. Why, look now on this beautiful, shining morning, how she ought to be admiring those far-stretching Ochils and the distant Braes of Donne! Here were the wooded banks of Allan Water; had these no romantic associations for her, no memories of broken-hearted lovers and sad stories, and the like? Had she no eye for the wide open strath they were now entering, with the silver winding Links of Forth coming nearer and nearer, and a pale blue smoke rising afar over the high walls and ramparts of Stirling town? He verily believed that, just to keep away from him, and fix her attention on something, she was capable of reading Parliamentary Debates—the last resort of the vacant mind.

But once they were away from Stirling again he determined at all hazards to startle her out of this distressing seclusion.

"Shena," said he, "do I look ill?"

She glanced up, frightened.

"No."

"I ought to look ill—I ought to look unhappy and miserable," said he, cheerfully. "Don't you know that I have been jilted?"

Well, she did not quite know what to say to that. He looked as if he was joking; and yet it was not a thing he was likely to mention in joke—and to her.

“It is quite true, I assure you,” said he, seeing that she did not make answer. “You said you had heard I was going to be married. Well, it’s all broken off.”

“I am very sorry,” said Shena Ván, as in duty bound; but she was clearly not very sure as to how to take the news.

“Oh, please don’t waste any pity on me,” said he. “I don’t feel very miserable. I feel rather the other way. ‘Ah, freedom is a noble thing’—you remember how Barbour used to puzzle you, Shena? Yes, I am free now to follow out my own wishes; and that’s what I mean to do.”

“You are going to live in London, perhaps?” said Miss Stewart, regarding him, but not betraying any keen personal interest.

“Why, this is the point of it,” said he, with greater animation, for at last she had deigned to lay down the newspaper, “that I don’t in the least know where I am going, and don’t much care. I have determined to be my own master, since my folk at home appeared disinclined to accept the programme I had sketched out; absolutely my own master. And now if you, Shena, would tell me something very fine and pleasant for me to do, that would be a kindness.”

“In the mean time,” said she, with a slight smile, “I wish you would call me by my right name.”

“Do you think I can forget the days when you were always ‘Shena’?” said he, with a sort of appealing glance that her eyes were careful to avoid. “Don’t you remember when I brought you the white kitten from Inverness, and how it was always pulling its collar of daisies to pieces? Don’t you remember my getting you the falcon’s wings? Why, I had to lie all night among the rocks on Carn-nan-Gael to get at that falcon. And you were always ‘Shena’ then.”

“Because I was a child,” said Miss Stewart, with a slight flush on the pretty, fresh-colored face. “When we grow up we put aside childish things.”

“But we can’t always forget,” said he.

“Indeed, it seems easy enough to many,” she answered, but with no apparent sarcasm or intention. “And you have not fixed when you are going, Mr. Leslie?” she added, with a certain formality.

“At the present moment, to tell you the truth,” said he, “I have half made an engagement to go away on a yachting cruise with a young fellow I know. But he is rather an ass. I am

not looking forward to it with any great pleasure. Ah! I could imagine another kind of trip."

She did not ask him what it was. She seemed more inclined to turn over the title-pages of the magazines.

"I can imagine two young people who are fond of each other being able to go away by themselves on a ramble through Italy—perhaps two young people who had been separated, and meeting after a time, and inclined to take their lives into their own hands, and do with them what seemed best—leaving friends and other considerations aside altogether. And they might have old times to talk about as they sat at dinner—by themselves—in a room at this or that hotel—perhaps overlooking the Rhine, it may be, if they were still in Germany; or perhaps overlooking the Arno, if they were in Florence. Fancy having only the one companion with you, to go through the galleries, and see all the pictures; and to go to the opera with you in the evening—just the one and only companion you would care to have with you. Wouldn't that be a trip?"

"I dare say," replied Miss Stewart, coldly. "But the two people would have to be pretty much of one mind."

"I am supposing they are fond of each other," said he, looking at her; but she would not meet his glance.

"I suppose it sometimes happens," said she, taking up one of the magazines, so that he was forced to seek refuge in a comic journal, greatly against his will.

By-and-by they were hurling onward through the solitudes where the youthful Clyde draws its waters from the burns that trickle and tumble down the slopes of "Tintock Tap." He thought it was not kind of Shena Ván to hide herself away like that. Her imagination would not warm to any picture he could draw—though that of their being together in a Florentine gallery seemed to him rather captivating. Perhaps she was offended at his having neglected her for such a long time? But she was a sensible young woman; she must have understood the reasons. And now had he not intimated to her that he was no longer inclined to submit to the influence of his friends? But she did not betray any interest or curiosity.

"I wonder whether we stop at Beattock Junction?" said he.

"I am sure I don't know," she answered, civilly.

"Has it occurred to you, Shena," said he, with a peculiar sort of smile, "that if any one who knew both of us happened to be at one of those stations, they might make a curious surmise about us?"

"I do not understand you," Miss Stewart observed.

"Did you ever hear of Allison's Bank Tollhouse?" he asked.

"No."

"That was where they made the Gretna Green marriages—it is just on this side the Border. I think it is rather a pity the Gretna Green marriages were done away with; it was an effectual way of telling your friends to mind their own business. There was no trouble about it. But it is just about as easy now, if you don't mind paying for a special license; and I do believe it is the best way. Your friends can get reconciled to it afterward if they like; if they don't like, they can do the other thing. That was what I was thinking, Shena—if some of our friends were to see us in this carriage, it wouldn't surprise me if they imagined we were on a venture of that kind."

Shena Vån blushed deeply, and was ashamed of her embarrassment; and said, with some touch of anger,

"They could not think of such nonsense!"

"It's the sensible plan, though, after all," said he, pertinaciously, and yet appearing to treat the subject as a matter of speculation. Jock o' Hazledean, Young Lochinvar, Ronald Macdonald, and the rest of them, why, they said, 'Oh, hang it, let's have no more bother about your friends; if you are willing to chance it, so am I; let's make a bolt of it, and they can have their howl when they find out.' And it answered well enough, according to all accounts. I rather think there was a row about Bonny Glenlyon; but then the noble sportsman who carried her off carried her off against her will; and that is a mistake. It's 'Will ye gang to the Hielands, Leezie Lindsay?' and if you can persuade her, she 'kilts up her coats o' green satin,' and you lift her into the saddle; but if she doesn't see it—if she thinks it isn't good enough—you drop the subject."

"You seem to have been reading a good many songs," said Shena Vån, rather coldly. "But people don't go on in that way in ordinary life."

"Perhaps it might be better if they did occasionally," said he. "You remember Jack Melville, of course?"

"Oh, certainly," said she, with some eagerness, for she thought he would now leave that other perilous topic.

"Well, I remember one night, in my rooms, when we were at Oxford together, he propounded the theory that morality is merely a system of laws devised by the aged and worn-out for keeping young people straight. Of course it was only a joke; but it startled the boys a bit. And although it was only a joke, mind you, there was something in it; I mean, for example, that it doesn't follow, because you're seventy, you know what is best

for a person of five-and-twenty. You may know what is most prudent, from the money point of view; but you don't necessarily know what is best. You look with different eyes. And there is a great deal too much of that going on nowadays."

"Of what?" she asked, innocently.

"Oh, of treating life as if everything were a question of money," replied this profound philosopher—who had for the moment forgotten all about Corrievreak in his anxiety to get a peep at Shena Vàn's unfathomable blue eyes.

Miss Stewart now returned to one of those inhuman periodicals; and he searched his wits in vain for some subject that would draw her thence. Moreover, he began to think that this train was going at a mercilous speed. They smashed through Lockerbie. They had scarcely a glimpse of Ecclefechan. Kirtlebridge went by like a flash of lightning. And then he recollected that very soon they would be at Gretna Green.

"Shena," said he, eagerly—"Shena, have you been as far south as this before?"

"Oh no," she answered. "I have never been farther south than Edinburgh and Glasgow. But Mary Vincent is to be at the station waiting for me."

"I did not mean that. Don't you know that soon you will be at Gretna? Don't you know you will soon be crossing the Border? Why, you should be interested in that! It is your first entrance into England. Shall I tell you the moment you are in England?"

"Oh yes, if you please," said Miss Stewart, condescending to look out and regard the not very picturesque features of the surrounding scenery.

"Well, you be ready to see a lot of things at once, for I don't know whether you actually see Gretna Green church; but I will show you the little stream that divides the two countries—that was the stream the runaway lovers were so anxious to get over. I am told they have extraordinary stories in Gretna about the adventures of those days—I wonder nobody goes and picks them up. They had some fun in those days. I wish I had lived then. Modern life is too monotonous—don't you think so?"

"I don't know," said Shena Vàn, honestly.

"I mean I wish I had lived in those days if I had had the chance of running away with somebody that made it worth the risk. Shena," said he, "supposing you had lived at that time, don't you think you would rather have had the excitement of that kind of wedding than the ordinary, humdrum sort of affair?"

"I have never thought anything about it," said Miss Stewart with some precision—as if any properly conducted young woman would give a moment's consideration to the manner in which she might wish to be married!

"Look! look!" said he, jumping up, and involuntarily putting his hand on her arm. "Look, Shena! The village is over there—here is the river, see!—it is the Sark—and the bridge is down there, to the left of that house—that house is an inn, the last in England on the old coach-road—"

She took away her arm. .

"Ah," said he, as he sat down, "many a happy couple were glad to find their great big George the Fourth phaeton clattering over the bridge there—the triumph after all the risk—"

Then he reflected that in a few minutes' time they would be in Carlisle; and this made him rather desperate; for when again should he see Shena Vân—and Shena Vân alone?

"Can you imagine yourself living at that time, Shena; and if I were to ask you to make off for Gretna with me and get married, what would you say?"

"You—you have no right to ask me such a question," said Shena Vân, rather breathlessly.

"There would have been no chance of your saying 'yes'?" he asked, gently.

"I don't know what you mean," said she, and she was nervously twisting the magazine in her hand. "I—I think you are forgetting. You are forgetting who you are—who I am—and everything that—that once happened—I mean, that nothing happened—for how could it? And to ask such a question—even in joke—well, I think you have no right to ask me such a question, and the absurdity of it is enough answer."

"I did not mean it as a joke at all, Shena," said he, quite humbly, and yet trying to catch sight of her eyes. "I asked you if you could imagine other circumstances—other circumstances in which I might ask you such a question. Of course, I am very sorry if I have offended you—"

"I think there has been enough said," said Miss Stewart, quietly, and indeed with a good deal of natural dignity.

Just before they were going into Carlisle station, she said:

"I hope, Mr. Leslie, you won't misunderstand me, but—but, of course Miss Vincent and her friends won't know who you are, and I would rather they did not know. There is always silly talk going on; it begins in amusement, and then people repeat it and believe it."

"I shall be quite a stranger to you when we get into the

station," said he. "And in the mean time I will say good-by to you; and you must tell me that we part good friends, although you do seem to care so little about those by-gone days, Shena."

"Good-by," said she, holding out her hand (but with her eyes cast down). "And perhaps I care for them as much as I ought; but one acquires a little common-sense as one grows up. I hope you will have a pleasant trip in the yacht, Mr. Leslie."

At the station he got out first, and assisted her to alight; then he got a porter for her, and raised his hat to her with the air of a perfect stranger, as she disappeared with her friends. Then he had his own things shifted into a first-class smoking compartment, and the journey was resumed.

It was a lonely journey. There was something wrong. He already hated the *Juliet*, and looked forward with disgust to being thrown on the society of a brainless young idiot. Nay, this was the matter: why had he not asked Janet Stewart plump and plain? Why had he not asked her to stop at Carstairs Junction, and go back with him to Edinburgh or Glasgow, where he could easily have found friends to take care of her until the special license had been obtained? Why had he not dared his fate? Sometimes women were captured by the very suddenness of the proposal.

"And as for the people at Lynn," he was saying to himself during these perturbed meditations, "why, then they might have had some good occasion to squawk. They might have squawked to some good purpose then. But I missed my chance—if ever there was one, and now it is this accursed yacht and that insufferable young nincompoop!"

Things did not look altogether serene for the Right Honorable Lord Dartown of Dartown, County Limerick, and Ashwood Manor, Berks,

CHAPTER XLVI.

A SPY.

It is quite impossible to describe the gladness and gratitude with which Yolande read the letter from the Master of Lynn, which not only gave her her freedom, but said good-by in such a friendly fashion. For once a ray of sunlight fell on a life which of late had not been of the brightest.

"Yolande, what is the matter? You have had good news this morning?" said the mother, coming into the room, and noticing the radiant face of the girl.

"Yes, indeed, mother—the best I have had for many a day," said she, and she led her mother to the window, and put her in the easy-chair, and patted her shoulder affectionately. "The best news I have had for many a day."

"What is it? May I ask?"

For an instant Yolande hesitated; then she laughed, and put the letter in her pocket.

"No; it would be too long to explain. But shortly I will tell you what it is, mother—why, only that one of the friends I know in the Highlands has been generous and kind to me. Is it a wonderful thing? Is it new—unexpected?"

"Ah, you ought to be with them, Yolande: not here, throwing away your time on me."

"Ridiculous! ridiculous!" said she, in her French way, and then with a light step and a bright face she went off to get writing materials.

"DEAR ARCHIE" (she wrote),—"It is so good of you. I do not deserve it. You have made me very happy; and I hope you also will soon be reconciled at home, and everything go well. It is a great pleasure you offer me that we should always continue friends, and I hope it will be so; I know it will on my side; and one may be in Inverness some day, perhaps?—then I should be pleased to see you again, and also your sister, and Colonel Graham. But that will be a long time, if at all; for my mother, though she is much better, does not get strong as I wish, and naturally I remain with her—perhaps for always. How could I leave her? But if once she were strong enough to travel, then one might perhaps see one's friends, in the Highlands or elsewhere; and in the mean time it is consolation to know that they remain your friends, and think of you occasionally. Dear Archie, you are really too kind to me, and too flattering also; but you can not expect a woman to fight very hard against that, so I am glad you will have as generous an opinion of me as is possible, even if it is exaggerated, and perhaps not quite true. I remember your speaking of your school-fellow very well—is he the most favorable of companions for a yachting voyage? I suppose you are going south, for now the days are becoming cold, and we are thinking of going away to the south also. How strange it would be if my mother and I were to be seated on one of the terraces at Monte Carlo, and

you were to come sailing into the harbor below us! You must tell me the name of the yacht; and when we are at Nice or Cannes, or such places, I will look in the newspapers for the lists, and perhaps hear of you.

"This is all I can write to you at the moment, but you must believe me that it does not convey to you anything like what I feel. You will excuse me—perhaps you will understand. But I will not forget your kindness.

"Your grateful

YOLANDE.

"P.S.—I will do as you wish about not stating any reasons, though I am afraid that is only another part of your consideration and generosity in disguise."

She went to get her hat and cloak.

"Tais-toi, mon gas,
Et ne ris pas,
Tout va de mal en pire,"

she was humming to herself, most inappropriately, as she put them on. And then she went back to her mother.

"Will you get ready, mother? I have a letter to post. And I want to see if they can get me as much more of that fur as will make a hood for a travelling cloak—ah, you have no idea how comfortable it is if the weather is cold, and you are on a long railway journey."

"Why, you spoil me, Yolande—you make a petted child of me," the mother protested.

"Come, get on your things," said she, not heeding. "And perhaps when we are seeking for the fur I might get a winter cloak for Jane. Does she not deserve a little present? She has been very attentive—has she not, do you think?"

"When she has had the chance, Yolande," the mother said, with a smile. "But you do everything yourself, child."

The alteration in the girl's manner after the receipt of that letter was most marked. Gladness dwelt in her eyes, and spoke in her voice. She grew so hopeful, too, about her mother's health that now, when they went out for a morning stroll among the shops, she would buy this or the other small article likely to be of use to them in travelling. That was partly why she presented Jane with that winter cloak; Jane was to be their sole attendant. And now all her talk was about orange groves and palms, and marble terraces shaded from the sun, and the summer-blue waters of the south.

But there was one person who certainly did not regard the

breaking off of this engagement with equanimity. Immediately on receiving the brief note sent from the Station Hotel at Inverness, Mrs. Graham, astonished and indignant and angry, posted over straightway to Lynn, and told her tale, and demanded explanations. Well, they had no explanations to offer. If it were true, Lord Lynn said, indifferently, it was a very good thing; but he did not choose to bother his head about it. Then pretty Mrs. Graham had a few words, verging on warmth, with her Aunt Colquhoun; but she quickly saw that that would not mend matters. Thereupon she thought she would appeal to Yolande herself; and she did so—dating the letter from Lynn Towers.

“MY DEAR YOLANDE” (she said),—“Is it true? Or has Archie been making a fool of us? Of course he is off without a word of explanation, and I can not imagine it possible that his and your engagement should have been so suddenly broken off, and without any apparent cause. Forgive me for interfering, dearest Yolande; I know it is no concern of mine, except in so far as this goes, that Archie is my brother, and I have a right to know whether he acted as he should have done, and as becomes the honor of our family. I have a right to know that. At the same time it seems *incredible* that you and he should have parted—and so suddenly—without any warning; for although there was some disagreement here, as he probably hinted to you, still that could have nothing to do with him and you ultimately, and he distinctly informed me that his position with regard to you was not affected, and would not be affected, by anything happening here. I hope I am not giving you pain in making these inquiries, dear Yolande; but I think I have a right to know that my brother conducted himself honorably; for it was through us, you may remember, that he made your acquaintance, and both Jim and I would consider ourselves in a measure responsible if he has behaved badly. But I dare say it is not so serious as that. I know he is impatient of worry, and probably he has asked you to—well, I don’t know what he could fairly ask; and all I can say is that I hope, if matters are as he says, that he has done nothing to cause us reproach. You may well think that we shall both—I mean Jim and I—be exceedingly grieved if it is true, for we both looked forward to having you as our sister and friend, and you may depend on it that if there had been any *temporary* disagreement in one quarter, that would have been more than atoned for in the warmth of the welcome you would have got from us. Pray forgive me, dearest Yolande, for beg-

ging a line from you at your very earliest convenience; it is not idle curiosity, and I trust your answer will be that Archie's exaggeration only means that for a while he is leaving you to the duties that now occupy you, and that in time everything will be as it was. My best love to you, dearest Yolande, from your affectionate friend,

MARY GRAHAM.

"P.S.—Surely it *cannot* be true, or your father would have told me on the day of his leaving Allnam-ba? Will you please write to Inverstroy?"

Yolande remembered her promise to the Master of Lynn, and deemed it safest to say as little as possible. So she merely wrote:

"MY DEAR MARY,—I hasten at once to say that your brother's conduct has been always and throughout most honorable, and that in the breaking off of our engagement it has been even more—it has been most manly and generous. Pray have no fears on that head. As for the reasons, it is scarcely worth while explaining them, when it is all over and gone now. Do you think you need tell me that you would have given me welcome in the Highlands?—indeed, I have had experience of that already. I hope still to be your friend, and perhaps some day, in the Highlands or elsewhere, we may be once more together. In the mean time please remember me most kindly to your husband, and believe me, yours affectionately,

"YOLANDE WINTERBOURNE."

Yolande now seemed to consider that episode in her life as over and done with, and set herself all the more assiduously to the service of her mother, who, poor woman! though she could not fail to see the greater cheerfulness and content of the girl, and probably herself derived some favorable influence from that, still remained in a weak and invalidish condition which prevented their migration to the south. However, something now occurred which stopped, once and for all, her recurrent entreaties that Yolande should go away to her own friends and leave her by herself. One day, as she was seated in her accustomed easy-chair, looking at the people and the sea and the ships, she suddenly uttered a slight exclamation, and then quickly rose and withdrew from the window.

"Yolande dear!" she exclaimed, in a voice of terror—"Yolande!"

"Yes, mother," the girl answered, looking calmly up from her sewing.

And then she saw that her mother was strangely agitated, and instantly she rose and caught her by the hand.

"What is it, mother?"

"I have seen that man that you know of—Romford."

"Well, what of that?" the girl said, quietly.

"But he was looking up at the house, Yolande," said she, obviously in great alarm. "He must know that we are here. He must have sought us out."

"Very well, and what of that?" said Yolande. And she added, with a gentle touch of scorn: "Does he wish to be asked to have some tea with us? I think we are not at home just now."

"But you don't understand, child—you don't understand," said the mother, with a kind of shiver. "To see him was to recall everything. I was in a dream, and now it looks hideous to me; and the thought of his coming here, and wishing to take me back to that life, when I did not care whether each day was to be the last—"

"My dear mother," said Yolande, "is it of much consequence what the gentleman wishes? It is of more consequence what I wish; and that is that you are to remain with me."

"Oh yes, with you, Yolande, with you!" she exclaimed, and she eagerly caught both hands of the girl and held them tight. "Always with you—always, always! I am not going away from you—I dare not go away. I have asked you to go to your friends, and leave me by myself; but I will not ask it again; I am afraid; if I were alone, he might come and speak to me—and—and persuade me that his wife was the one who best knew how to take care of me. Oh, when I think of it, Yolande, it maddens me!"

"Then you need not think of it, mother dear," said the girl, pressing her to sit down. "Leave Mr. Romford to me. Oh, I will make him content with me, if he chooses to be troublesome. Do not fear."

"If he should come to the house, Yolande?"

"The ladies do not receive this afternoon," she answered, promptly, "nor to-morrow afternoon, nor the next day morning, nor any other time, when the gentleman calls whom you will describe to the landlady and her two girls, and also to Jane. As for me, I scarcely saw him—I was too bewildered, and too anxious about you, mother, and then at last, when he did come near to me, *pouf!* away he went on the pavement. And as for him now, I do not care for him *that!*" and she flicked her middle finger from the tip of her thumb.

"But he may speak to us on the street, child!"

"And if we do not wish to be spoken to, is there no protection?" said Yolande, proudly. "Come to the window, mother, and I will show you something."

"Oh, no, no!" she said, shrinking back.

"Very well, then, I will tell you. Do you not know the good-natured policeman who told us when the harness was wrong at the shaft, and put it right for us? And if we say to him that we do not wish to have any of the gentleman's conversation, is it not enough?"

"I do not think I could go back now," the mother said, absently, as if she were looking over the life, or rather the living death, she had led. "I have seen you. I could not go back and forget you; and be a trouble to you, and to your father. He must be a forgiving man to have let you come to me; and yet not wise. I was content; and those people were kind to me. Why should your life be sacrificed?"

"What a dreadful sacrifice, then!" exclaimed Yolande, with a smile. "Look around—it is a dreadful sacrifice! And when we are at Cannes, and at San Remo, and at Bordighera, it will be even more horrible and dreadful."

"But no, no, I can not go back now," she said. "The sight of that man recalls everything to me. And yet they were kind to me. I could do as I pleased; and it was all in a kind of dream. I seemed to be walking through the night always. And indeed I did not like the daytime—I liked to be in my own room alone in the evening, with newspapers and books—and it was a kind of half-sleep with waking pictures—sometimes of you, Yolande—very often of you; but not as you are now—and then they would come and torture me with telling me how badly I was treated in not being allowed to see you—and then—then I did not know what I did. It is terrible to think of."

"Don't think of it, mother, then."

"It is all before me again," the wretched woman said, with a kind of despair. "I see what I have been, and what people have thought of me. How can I raise myself again? It is no use trying. My husband away from me, my friends ashamed to speak of me, my child throwing away her young life to no end—why should I try?—I should be better away—anywhere—to hide myself, and be no longer an injury and a shame."

"Mother," said Yolande, firmly (for she had had to fight those fits of hopelessness before, and knew the way of them well), "don't talk nonsense. I have undertaken to make you well, and I have very nearly succeeded, and I am not going to have my patient break down on my hands, and people say I am a bad

doctor. I wonder what you would have said if I had called in a real doctor, to give you physic and all the rest of it, whereas I get all kinds of nice things for you, and take you out for drives and walks, and never a word of medicine mentioned. And I don't think it is fair, when you are getting on so well, to let yourself drop into a fit of despondency, for that will only make you worse, and give me so much longer trouble before I have you pulled through. For you are not going to shake me off—no, not at all—and the sooner you are well, the sooner we are off to France and Italy, and the longer you are not well, the longer it is you keep me in Worthing, which perhaps you will not find so cheerful when the winter comes. Already it is cold; some morning when you get up you will see—what? nothing but snow!—everything white, and then you will say it is time to fly, and that is right, but why not sooner?"

"Well, to be beside you, Yolande," said the mother, stroking the girl's hand, "is what I live for. If it were not for that, I should not care what happened."

Yolande professed to treat this Mr. Romford as a person of little account; but she was in her inmost heart a trifle more disquieted than outwardly she made believe. She shrewdly suspected that he was not the sort of gentleman to be disporting himself at a watering-place merely for amusement; and she made no doubt that, somehow or other, he had found out their address, and had followed them hither in the hope of getting her mother once more under his control. As to that, she had no fear; but, to make sure that he had no monetary or other claim that could warrant his even knocking at the door of the house, she resolved to write at once to Lawrence & Lang. The answer was prompt; she got it by the first post next morning; and it said that as "our Mr. Lang," by a fortunate accident, happened to be at the moment in Brighton, they had telegraphed to him to go along and see her; consequently Miss Winterbourne might expect him to call on her during the course of the day.

This was far from being in accordance with Yolande's wish; but she could not now help it; and so she went to her mother, and said that a gentleman would probably call that day with whom she wanted to have a few minutes' private talk; and would the mother kindly remain in her room for that time?

"Not—not Romford?" said she, in alarm.

"I said a gentleman, mother," Yolande answered.

And then a strange kind of glad light came into the mother's face; and she took her daughter's hands in hers.

"Can it be, then, Yolande? There is one who is dear to you?"

The girl turned very pale for a second or so; but she forced herself to laugh.

"Nonsense, mother. The gentleman is calling on business. It is very inconvenient; but the firm told him to come along from Brighton; and now I can't prevent him."

"I had hoped it was something more," said the mother, gently, as she turned to her book again.

Mr. Lang called about half-past twelve.

"I am very sorry you should have taken so much trouble about so small an affair," said Yolande.

"But you must understand, Miss Winterbourne," said the tall, white-haired man, with the humorous smile and good-natured eyes, "that our firm are under the strictest injunctions to pay instant heed to the smallest things you ask of us. You have no idea how we have been lectured and admonished. But I grant you this is nothing. The man is a worthless fellow, who is probably disappointed, and he may hang about, but you have nothing to fear from him. Everything has been paid; we have a formal acquittance. I dare say the scoundrel got three times what was really owing to him, but it was not a prodigious sum. Now what do you want me to do? I can't prosecute him for being in Worthing."

"No; but what am *I* to do if he persists in speaking to my mother when we are out walking?"

"Give him in charge. He'll depart quick enough. But I should say you had little to fear in that direction. Unless he has a chance of speaking to your mother alone, he is not likely to attempt it at all."

"And that he shall not have; I can take care of that," said Yolande, with decision.

"You really need not trouble about it. Of course if he found your mother in the hands of a stranger, what happened before might happen now; that is to say, he would go and try to talk her over; would say that she was never so happy as when he and his wife were waiting on her, that they were her real friends, and all that stuff. But I don't think he will tackle you," he added, with a friendly sort of smile.

"He shall not find my mother alone," said Yolande.

"I hear everything is going on well?" he ventured to say.

"I hope so—I think so," she answered.

"It was risky—I may say, it was a courageous thing for you to do, but you had warm friends looking on."

She started and looked up, but he proceeded to something else.

"I suppose I may not see Mrs. Winterbourne—or may I?"

"I think not," said Yolande. "It would only alarm her, or at least excite her, and I am keeping all excitement away from her. And if you will excuse me, Mr. Lang, I will not keep her waiting. It is so kind of you to have come along from Brighton."

"I dare not disobey such very strict orders," said he, with a smile, as he took up his hat and opened the door.

She did not ring the bell, however, for the maid-servant; she said she would herself see him out, and she followed him downstairs. In the passage she said:

"I want you to tell me something, Mr. Lang. I want you to tell me who it was who explained to you what you were to do for me when I arrived in London, for I think I know."

"Then there can be no harm in telling you, my dear young lady. He called again on us, about a couple of weeks ago, on his way north, and laid us under more stringent orders than ever. Mr. John Melville. Was that your guess?"

"Yes," said Yolande, with her eyes downcast, but in perfectly calm tones. "I thought it was he. I suppose he was quite well when you saw him?"

"Oh yes, apparently—certainly."

"Good-by, Mr. Lang. It is so kind of you to have taken all this trouble."

"Good-morning," said Mr. Lang, as he opened the door and went his way. And he also had his guess.

CHAPTER XLVII.

SNOW AND SUNLIGHT.

YOLANDE, however, was a strict and faithful guardian; and Mr. Romford, no doubt finding it impossible to get speech of her mother alone, had probably left the place, for they saw no more of him. - Indeed, they were thinking of other matters. Yolande was anxious to get away to the south, and yet afraid to risk the fatigue of travelling on a system obviously so frail as her mother's was. She kept lingering on and on in the hope of seeing some improvement taking place, but her mother, though much more cheerful in spirits, did not seem to gain in strength; indeed, she seemed physically so weak that again and again

Yolande postponed their departure. This also had its drawbacks, for the weather was becoming more and more wintry, and out-of-door exercise was being restricted. It was too cold for driving; Yolande had sent back the pony-carriage. Then she dared not expose her mother to northerly or easterly winds. Frequently now she had to go out for her morning walk by herself, a brisk promenade once or twice up and down the pier being enough to send her home with pink cheeks. At last she said to her mother, with some timidity,

"I have been thinking, mother, that we might take some one's advice as to whether you are strong enough to bear the journey."

"I think I could go," the mother said. "Oh yes, I should like to try, Yolande, for you seem so anxious about it, and of course Worthing must be dull for you."

The girl did not mind this reference to herself.

"I have been thinking how it could be most easily done, mother. I would get a carriage here, and have you nicely wrapped up from the cold, and we should drive to Newhaven; that would be more comfortable than the tedious railway journey round by Lewes. Then we should choose our own time of crossing when the sea was calm; and the railway journey from Dieppe to Paris is so much shorter than the Calais route. But to Marseilles—that is a terrible long journey."

"I think I could do it, Yolande; I see you are so anxious to get away—and no wonder."

"I am anxious for your sake, mother. But I am afraid to take the responsibility. Would you mind my asking some one? Would you mind my taking some advice?"

"But you are the best doctor I have ever had," said the mother, with a smile. "I would rather take your advice than any one's."

"But I am afraid, mother," she said. And then she added, cautiously, "It was not the advice of a doctor I was thinking of."

"Whose, then?"

The girl went and stood by her mother's side, and put her hand gently on her shoulder.

"Mother, my father is fretting that he can be of no service to us."

"Oh, no, no, no, Yolande!" the other cried, with a sudden terror. "Don't think of it, Yolande—it would kill me—he will never forgive me."

"There is no forgiveness needed, mother; all that is over and forgotten. Mother—"

But the mere mention of this proposal seemed to have driven the poor woman into a kind of frenzy. She clung to her daughter's arm, and said in a wild sort of way,

"If I saw him, Yolande, I should think he was coming to take you away from me—to take you away from me! It would be the old days come back again—and—and the lawyers—"

She was all trembling now, and clinging to the girl's arm.

"Stay with me, Yolande; stay with me. I know I have done great harm and injury, and I can not ask him to forgive me; but you—I have not harmed you; I can look into your face without reproach."

"I will stay with you, mother; don't be afraid. Now pray calm yourself; I won't speak of that again, if it troubles you; we shall be just by our two selves for as long as ever you like; and as for lawyers, and doctors, or anybody else, why, you shall not be allowed to know that they exist."

So she gradually got her mother calmed again; and by-and-by, when she got the opportunity, she sat down and wrote to her father, saying that at present it was impossible he should come and see them, for that the mere suggestion of such a thing had violently alarmed and excited her mother, and that excitement of any kind did her most serious mischief. She added that she feared she would have to take on her own shoulders the responsibility of deciding whether they should attempt the journey; that most likely they would try to proceed by short stages; and that, in that case, she would write to him again for directions as to where they should go on arriving in Paris.

That, indeed, was what it came to; although the girl naturally wished to share with some qualified person the responsibility of the decision. But now, as heretofore, whenever she hinted that they ought to call in a skilled physician, merely for a consultation, the mother betrayed such a nervous horror of the idea of seeing any stranger that the proposal had to be dropped.

"Why, Yolande, why?" she would say. "I am well enough—only a little weak. I shall be stronger by-and-by. What could you ask of a doctor?"

"Oh, well, mother," the girl said, rather vaguely, "one might leave it to himself to make suggestions. Perhaps he might be of some help—who knows? There are tonics now, do you see, that might strengthen you—quinine, perhaps?—or—"

"No, no," said she, in rather a sad fashion. "I have done with drugs, Yolande. You shall be my doctor; I don't want any one else. I am in your hands."

"It is too great a responsibility, mother."

“You mean to decide whether we leave Worthing?” said the mother, cheerfully. “Well, I will decide for you, Yolande. I say—let us go.”

“We could go slowly—in short distances,” the girl said, thoughtfully. “Waiting here or there for fine weather, do you see, mother? For example, we would not set out at this moment, for the winds are boisterous and cold. And then, mother, if there is fatigue—if you are very tired with the journey, think of the long rest and idleness at Nice—and the soft air.”

“Very well, Yolande; whatever you do will be right. And I am ready to set out with you whenever you please.”

Yolande now set about making final preparations for leaving England; and amongst the first of these was the writing a letter to Mrs. Bell. It was little more than a message of good-by; but still she intimated that she should be glad to hear how affairs were going on at Gress, and also what was being done about Monaglen. And she begged Mrs. Bell’s acceptance of the accompanying bits of lace, which she had picked up at some charitable institution in the neighborhood, and which she thought would look nice on black silk.

The answer, which arrived speedily, was as follows:

GRESS, *the 11th November.*

“MY DEAR YOUNG LADY,—It was a great honor to me to receive the letter from you this morning, and a great pleasure to me to know that you are well, this leaving us all here in the same. Maybe I would have taken the liberty to write to you before now, but that I had not your address, and Duncan, the keeper, was ignorant of it. And I had a mind to ask the Hon. Mrs. Graham, seeing her drive past one day on her return; but they glai-
ket lassies that were to have told me when they saw her come along the road again were forgetful, as usual, and so I missed the opportunity. My intention was to tell you about Monaglen, which you are so kind as to ask about. It is all settled now, and the land made over to its rightful possessor; and I may say that when the Lord, in His good time, sees fit to take me, I will close my eyes in peace, knowing that I have done better with what was intrusted to me than otherwise might have happened. But in the mean time my mind is ill at ease, and I am not thankful for such mercies as have been vouchsafed to me, because I would fain have Mr. Melville informed of what has been done, and yet not a word dare I speak. At the best he is a by-ordinar proud, camstrary man; but ever since he has come back this last time he is more unsettled and distant like—not con-

versing with people, as was his custom, but working at all kinds of hours, as if his life depended on they whigmaleeries; and then again away over the hills and moors by himself, without even the pastime of fishing that used to occupy him. Deed, I tried once to tell him, but my brain got into a kind of whummle; I could not get out a word; and as he was like to think me an idiwut, I made some excuse about the school-laddies, and away he went. Howsever, what's done can not be undone. The lawyers vouch for that; and a pretty penny they charged me. But Monaglen is his, to have and to hold, whether he wil or no, and the Melvilles have got their ain again, as the song says. And if any one tells me that I could have done better with the money I will not gainsay them, for there are wiser heads than mine in the world; but I will say that I had the right to do what pleased myself with what belonged to me.

“Many's the time I wish that I had an intervener that would tell him of it, and take the task off my hands; for I am sore afraid that did I do it myself, having little skill of argument or persuasion, he would just be off in a fluff, and no more to be said. For that matter, I might be content with things as they are, knowing that his father's land would go to him when my earthly pilgrimage was come an end; but sometimes my heart is grieved for the poor lad, when I'm thinking that maybe he is working early and late, and worrying himself into a whey-faced condition, to secure a better future for himself, when the future is sure enough if he only kened. Besides that, I jalouse there's a possibility of his going away again; for I see there are bits of things, that he put together on the day when you, dear young lady, left Allt-nam-ba, that he has not unpacked again; and he has engaged the young lad Dalrymple at a permanent wage now, seeing that the chiel does very well with the school-bairns—though I envy not the mother that had to keep him in porridge when he was a laddie. Now that is how we are situate here, my dear young lady, since you have been so kind as to remember us; and I would fain be asking a little more news about yourself if it was not making bold, for many's the time I have wondered whether ye would come back again to Allt-nam-ba. It is a rough place for gentle-nurtured people, and but little companionship for a young lady; but I heard tell the shooting was good, and if the gentlemen are coming back, I hope you'll no be kept away by the roughness of the place, for I'm sure I would like to have a glint of your face again. And I would say my thanks for the collar and cuffs in that beautiful fine lace, but indeed there is more in my heart than the tongue can

speak. It is just too good of ye; and although such things are far too fine for an old woman like me, still I'm thinking I'll be putting them on next Sabbath morning, just to see if Mr. Melville will be asking if I have taken leave of my five senses. But he has not been familiar like since his coming back, which is a sorrow to me, that must keep my tongue tied when I would fain speak.

“This is all at present, dear young lady, from your humble servant,
CHRISTINA BELL.”

For one breathless second it flashed across Yolande's brain that she would become the “intervener.” Would it not be a friendly thing to do, as she was leaving England, to write and tell him, and to lay an injunction on him not to disappoint this kind creature's hopes? But then she turned away. The past was past. Her interests and duties were here. And so—with something of a sigh, perhaps—she took to the immediate business of getting ready for the journey; and had everything so prepared that they were ready to start at a moment's notice, whenever the weather was propitious.

And, indeed, they had fixed definitely the day of their departure, when, on the very night before, the varying northerly winds, that had been blowing with more or less of bitterness for some time, culminated in a gale. It was an unusual quarter—most of the gales on that part of the coast coming from the south and the southwest; but all the same the wind during the night blew with the force of a hurricane, and the whole house shook and trembled. Then, in the morning, what was their astonishment to find the sunlight pouring in at the parlor windows; and outside, the world white and hushed under a sheet of dazzling snow! That is to say, as much of the world as was visible—the pavement, and the street, and the promenade, and the beach; beyond that the wind-ruffled bosom of the sea was dark and sullen in comparison with this brilliant white wonder lying all around. And still the northerly gale blew hard; and one after another strangely dark clouds were blown across the sky, until, as they got far enough to the south, the sun would shine through them with a strange coppery lustre, and then would disappear altogether, and the dark sea would become almost black. And then again the fierce wind would hurry on the smoke-colored pall to the horizon; and there would be glimpses of a pale blue sky flecked with streaks of white; and the brilliant sunlight would be all around them once more, on the boats and the shingle and the railings and the snow-whitened streets.

Now Yolande's mother was strangely excited by the scene; for it confirmed her in a curious fancy she had formed that during all the time she had been under the influence of those drugs she had been living in a dream, and that she was now making the acquaintance again of the familiar features of the world as she once had known them.

"It seems years and years since I saw the snow," she said, looking on the shining white world in a mild entrancement of delight. "Oh, Yolande, I should like to see the falling snow—I should like to feel it on my hands."

"You are likely to see it soon enough, mother," said the girl, who had noticed how from time to time the thick clouds going over shrouded everything in an ominous gloom. "In the mean time I shall go round after breakfast and tell Mr. Watherston not to send the carriage: we can't start in a snow-storm."

"But why not send Jane, Yolande? It will be bitterly cold outside."

"I suppose it will be no colder for me than for her," Yolande said. And then she added, with a smile of confession, "Besides, I want to see what everything looks like."

"Will you let me go with you? May I?" said the mother, wistfully.

"You?" said Yolande, laughing. "Yes, that is likely—that is very likely! You are in good condition to face a gale from the northeast, and walk through snow at the same time!"

When Yolande went out she found it was bitterly cold, even though the terrace of houses sheltered her from the northeast wind. She walked quickly—and even with a kind of exhilaration, for this new thing in the world was a kind of excitement; and when she had gone and delivered her message, she thought she would have a turn or two up and down the pier, for there the snow had been in a measure swept from the planks, and there was freer walking. Moreover, she had the whole promenade to herself; and when she got to the end she could turn to find before her the spectacle of the long line of coast and the hills inland all whitened with the snow, while around her the sullen-hued sea seemed to shiver under the gusts of wind that swept down on it. Walking back was not so comfortable as walking out; nevertheless, she took another turn or two, for she knew that if the snow began to fall she might be imprisoned for the day; and she enjoyed all the natural delight of a sound constitution in brisk exercise. She had to walk smartly to withstand the cold, and the fight against the wind was something; altogether, she remained on the pier longer than she had intended.

Then something touched her cheek, and stung her, as it were. She turned and looked: soft, white flakes—a few of them only, but they were large—were coming, fluttering along and past her; and here and there one alighted on her dress like a moth, and hung there. It was strange, for the sunlight was shining all around her, and there were no very threatening clouds visible over the land. But they grew more and more frequent; they lit on her hair, and she shook them off; they lit on her eyelashes, and melted moist and cold into her eyes; at length they had given a fairly white coating to the front of the dress, and so she made up her mind to make for home, through this bewilderment of snow and sunlight. It was a kind of fairy thing, as yet, and wonderful and beautiful; but she knew very well that as soon as the clouds had drifted over far enough to obscure the sun, it would look much less wonderful and supernatural, and she would merely be making her way through an ordinary and somewhat heavy fall of snow.

But when she got nearer to the house something caught her eye there that filled her with a sudden dismay. Her mother was standing in the balcony, and she had her hands outstretched as if she were taking a childish delight in feeling the flakes fall on her fingers; and when she saw Yolande she waved a pleasant recognition to her. Yolande—sick at heart with dread—hurried to the door; ran upstairs when she got in, and rushed to the balcony. She was breathless; she could not speak; she could only seize her mother by the arm, and drag her into the room.

“Why, what is it, Yolande?” the mother said. “I saw you coming through the snow. Isn’t it beautiful—beautiful! It looks like dreams and pictures of long ago—I have not felt snow on my hands and my hair for so many and many years—”

“How could you be so imprudent, mother!” the girl said, when she had got breath. “And without a shawl! Where was Jane? To stand out in the snow—”

“It was only for a minute, Yolande,” said she, while the girl was dusting the snow from her mother’s shoulders and arms with her pocket-handkerchief. “It was only a minute—and it was so strange to see snow again.”

“But why did you go out?—why did you go out?” the girl repeated. “On a bitterly cold morning like this, and bare-headed and bare-necked.”

“Well, yes, it is cold outside,” she said, with an involuntary shiver. “I did not think it would be so cold. There, that will do, Yolande; I will sit down by the fire, and get warm again.”

“What you ought to do is to have some hot brandy and water, and go to bed, and have extra blankets put over you,” said Yolande, promptly.

“Oh no; I shall be warm again directly,” said she, though she shivered slightly, as she got into the easy-chair by the fire, and began chafing her hands, which were red and cold with the wet snow. “It was too much of a temptation, Yolande—that is the fact. It was making the acquaintance of the snow again.”

“It was more like making the acquaintance of a bad cold,” said Yolande, sharply.

However, she got some thick shawls and put them round her mother, and the shivering soon ceased. She stirred up the fire, and brought her some illustrated papers, and then went away to get some things out again from the portmanteaus, for it was clearly no use thinking of travelling in this weather. It had settled down to snowing heavily; the skies were dark; there was no more of the fairy-land performance of the morning; and so Yolande set about making themselves as comfortable as possible within-doors, leaving their future movements to be decided by such circumstances as should arise.

But during that evening Yolande’s mother seemed somewhat depressed, and also a little bit feverish and uncomfortable.

“I should not wonder if you were going to have a very bad cold, mother,” the girl said. “I should not wonder if you had caught a chill by going out on the balcony.”

“Nonsense, nonsense, child; it was only for a minute or so.”

“I wish you would take something hot before going to bed, mother. Port-wine negus is good, is it not? I do not know. I have only heard. Or hot whiskey and water? Mr. Shortlands had three tumblers of it after he fell into the Uisge-nan-Sithean, and had to walk the long distance home in wet clothes; and the rugs and shawls we had put on his bed—oh, it is impossible to tell the number.”

“No, never mind, Yolande,” the mother said. “I would rather not have any of these things. But I am a little tired. I think I will go to bed now; and perhaps Jane could ask for an extra blanket for me. You need not be alarmed. If I have caught a slight cold—well, you say we ought not to start in such weather in any case.”

“Shall I come and read to you, mother?”

“No, no; why should you trouble? Besides, I am rather tired; most likely I shall go to sleep. Now I will leave you to your novel about the Riviera; and you must draw in your chair

to the fire; and soon you will have forgotten that there is such a thing as snow."

And so they bade good-night to each other, and Yolande was not seriously disturbed.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

A MEETING.

BUT next morning the mother was ill—nay, as Yolande in her first alarm imagined, seriously ill. She could hardly speak; her hands and forehead were hot and feverish; she would take nothing in the shape of breakfast; she only turned away her head languidly. Yolande was far too frightened to stay to consult her mother's nervous fancies or dislikes; a doctor was sent for instantly—the same doctor, in fact, who had been called in before. And when this portly, rubicund, placid person arrived his mere presence in the room seemed to introduce a measure of calm into the atmosphere; and that was well. He was neither excited nor alarmed. He made the usual examination, asked a few questions, and gave some general and sufficiently sensible directions as to how the patient should be tended. And then he said he would write out a prescription—for this practitioner, in common with most of his kind, had retained that simple and serene faith in the efficacy of drugs which has survived centuries of conflicting theories, contradictions in fact, and scientific doubt, and which is perhaps more beneficial than otherwise to the human race, so long as the quantities prescribed are so small as to do no positive harm. It was aconite, this time, that he chose to experiment with.

However, when he followed Yolande into the other room, in order to get writing materials, and when he sat down and began to talk to her, it was clear that he understood the nature of the case well enough; and he plainly intimated to her that, when a severe chill like this had caught the system and promised to produce a high state of fever, the result depended mainly on the power of the constitution to repel the attack and fight its way back to health.

"Now I suppose I may speak frankly to you, Miss Winterbourne?" said he.

"Oh yes; why not?" said Yolande, who was far too anxious to care about formalities.

"You must remember, then, that though you have only seen me once before, I have seen you twice. The first time you were insensible. Now," said he, fixing his eyes on her, "on that occasion I was told a little, but I guessed more. It was to frighten your mother out of the habit that you took your first dose of that patent medicine. May I assume that?"

"Well, yes," said Yolande, with downcast eyes—though, indeed, there was nothing to be ashamed of.

"Now, I want you to tell me honestly whether you believe that warning had effect."

"Indeed, I am sure of it," said Yolande, looking up, and speaking with decision.

"You think that since then she has not had recourse to any of those opiates?"

"I am positively certain of it," Yolande said to him.

"I suppose being deprived of them cost the poor lady a struggle?" he asked.

"Yes, once or twice—but that was some time ago. Latterly she was growing ever so much more bright and cheerful, but still she was weak, and I was hesitating about risking the long journey to the south of France. Yes, it is I that am to blame. Why did I not go sooner? Why did I not go sooner?" she repeated, with tears coming into her eyes.

"Indeed you can not blame yourself, Miss Winterbourne," the doctor said. "I have no doubt you acted for the best. The imprudence you tell me of might have happened anywhere. If you keep the room warm and equable, your mother will do as well here as in the south of France—until it is safe for you to remove her."

"But how soon, doctor?—how soon? Oh, when I get the chance again I will not wait."

"But you must wait—and you must be patient, and careful. It will not do to hurry matters. Your mother is not strong. The fight may be a long one. Now, Miss Winterbourne, you will send and get this prescription made up; and I will call again in the afternoon."

Yolande went back to her mother's room, and sent away Jane; she herself would be nurse. On tiptoe she went about, doing what she thought would add to her mother's comfort; noiselessly tending the fire that had been lit, arranging a shutter so that less light should come in, and so forth, and so forth. But the confidence inspired by the presence of the doctor was

gone now ; a terrible anxiety had succeeded ; and when at last she sat down in the silent room, and felt that she could do nothing more, a sense of helplessness, of loneliness, entirely overcame her, and she was ready to despair. Why had she not gone away sooner, before this terrible thing happened ? Why had she delayed ? They might now have been walking happily together along some sunny promenade in the South—instead of this—this hushed and darkened room ; and the poor invalid, whom she had tended so carefully, and who seemed to be emerging into a new life altogether, thus thrown back and rendered once more helpless. Why had she gone out on that fatal morning ? Why had she left her mother alone ? If she had been in the room there would have been no venturing into the snow, whatever dreams and fancies were calling. If she had but taken courage and set out for the South a week sooner—a day sooner—this would not have happened ; and it seemed so hard that when she had almost secured the emancipation of her mother—when the undertaking on which she had entered with so much of fear, and wonder, and hope was near to being crowned with success—the work should be undone by so trifling an accident. She was like to despair.

But patience—patience—she said to herself. She had been warned, before she had left Scotland, that it was no light matter that lay before her. If she was thrown back into prison, as it were, at this moment, the door would be opened some day. And, indeed, it was not of her own liberty she was thinking—it was the freedom of light and life and cheerfulness that she had hoped to secure for this stricken and hapless creature whom fortune had not over-well treated.

Her mother stirred, and instantly she went to the bedside.

“What does the doctor say, Yolande ?” she asked, apparently with some difficulty.

“Only what every one sees,” she said, with such cheerfulness as was possible. “You have caught a bad cold, and you are feverish ; but you must do everything that we want you to do, and you will fight it off in time.”

“What kind of day is it outside ?” she managed to ask again.

“It is fine, but cold. There has been some more snow in the night.”

“If you wish to go out, go out, Yolande. Don’t mind me.”

“But I am going to mind you, mother, and nobody else. Here I am, here I stay, till you are well again. You shall have no other nurse.”

"You will make yourself ill, Yolande. You must go out."

She was evidently speaking with great difficulty.

"Hush, mother, hush!" the girl said; "I am going to stay with you. You should not talk any more—it pains you, does it not?"

"A little." And then she turned away her head again. "If I don't speak to you, Yolande, don't think it is unkind of me. I—I am not very well, I think."

And so the room was given over to silence again, and the girl to anxious thoughts as to the future. She had resolved not to write to her father until she should know more definitely. She would not unnecessarily alarm him. At first, in her sudden alarm, she had thought of summoning him at once; but now she had determined to wait until the doctor had seen her mother again. If this were only a bad cold, and should show symptoms of disappearing, then she could send him a re-assuring message. At present she was far too upset, and anxious, and disturbed to carefully weigh her expressions.

About noon Jane stole silently into the room, and handed her a letter, and withdrew again. Yolande was startled when she glanced at the handwriting, and hastily opened the envelope. The letter came from Inverness, and was dated the morning of the previous day: that was all she noted carefully—the rest seemed to swim into her consciousness all at once, she ran her eye over the successive lines so rapidly, and with such a breathless agitation.

"MY DEAR YOLANDE," Jack Melville wrote,—“I shall reach Worthing just about the same time as this letter. I am coming to ask you for a single word. Archie Leslie has told me—quite casually, in a letter about other things—that you are no longer engaged to him; and I have dared to indulge in some vague hopes—well, it is for you to tell me to put them aside forever, or to let them remain, and see what the future has in store. That is all. I don't wish to interfere with your duties of the moment—how should I?—but I can not rest until I ascertain from yourself whether or no I may look forward to some distant time, and hope. I am coming on the chance of your not having left Worthing. Perhaps you may not have left; and I beg of your kindness to let me see you, for ever so short a time.”

She quickly and quietly went to the door and opened it. Her face was very pale.

“Jane!”

The maid was standing at the window, looking out; she immediately turned and came to her mistress.

“You remember Mr. Melville, who used to come to the lodge?”

“Oh yes, miss.”

“He will be in Worthing to-day—he will call here—perhaps soon—”

She paused for a second, in this breathless, despairing way of talking, as if not knowing what to say.

“He will ask to see me—well—you will tell him I can not see him. I can not see him. My mother is ill. Tell him I am sorry—but I can not see him.”

“Oh yes, miss,” said the girl, wondering at her young mistress’s agitation.

Then Yolande quietly slipped into the room again—glancing at her mother, to see whether her absence had been noticed; and her hand was clutching the letter, and her heart beating violently. It was too terrible that he should arrive at such a moment—amid this alarm and anxiety. She could not bear the thought of meeting him. Already she experienced a sort of relief that she was in the sick-room again: that was her place; there her duties lay. And so she sat in the still and darkened room, listening with a sort of dread for the ring at the bell below; and then picturing to herself his going away; and then thinking of the years to come, and perhaps his meeting her; and she grew to fancy (while some tears were stealing down her cheeks) that very likely he would not know her again when he saw her, for she knew that already her face was more worn than it used to be, and the expression of the eyes changed. When she did hear the ring at the bell her heart leaped as if she had been shot; but she breathed more freely when the door was shut again. She could imagine him walking along the pavement. Would he think her unkind? Perhaps he would understand? At all events, it was better that he was gone; it was a relief to her; and she went stealthily to the bedside, to see whether her mother was asleep; and now all her anxiety was that the doctor should make his appearance soon, and give her some words of cheer, so that she should have no need to write to her father.

This was what happened when Melville came to the door. To begin with, he was not at all sure that he should find Yolande there, for he had heard from Mrs. Bell that she and her mother were leaving England. But when Jane, in response to his ringing of the bell, opened the door, then he knew that they were not gone.

“Miss Winterbourne is still here, then?” he said, quickly, and indeed with some appearance of anxiety in the pale, handsome face.

“Yes, sir.”

He paused for a second.

“Will you be good enough to ask her if I can see her for a moment?” he said, at length. “She knows that I meant to call on her.”

“Please, sir, Miss Winterbourne told me to say that she was very sorry, but that she can not see you.”

He seemed as one stupefied for a moment.

“Her mother is ill, sir,” said Jane.

“Oh,” he said, a new light breaking in on him—for indeed that first blunt refusal, as uttered by the maid, was bewildering.

“Not very ill, is she?”

“Well, sir,” said Jane, in the same stolid fashion, “I think she is very ill, sir, but I would not say so to my young mistress, sir.”

“Of course not—of course not,” he said, absently; and then he suddenly asked, “Has Miss Winterbourne sent for her father?”

“I think not, sir. I think she is waiting to hear what the doctor says.”

“Who is the doctor?”

She gave him both the name and address.

“Thank you,” said he. “I will not trouble Miss Winterbourne with any message.” And with that he left.

But he sent her a message—some half-hour thereafter. It was merely this:

“DEAR YOLANDE,—I am deeply grieved to have intruded upon you at such a time. Forgive me. I hope to hear better news; but do not you trouble; I have made arrangements so that I shall know.—J. M.”

And Yolande put that note with the other—for in truth she had carefully preserved every scrap of writing that he had ever sent her; and it was with a wistful kind of satisfaction that at least he had gone away her friend. It was something—nay, it was enough. If all that she wished for in the world could get so near to completion as this, then she would ask for nothing more.

The doctor did not arrive till nearly three o'clock, and she awaited his verdict with an anxiety amounting to distress. But

he would say nothing definite. The fever had increased, certainly; but that was to be expected. She reported to him—as minutely as her agitation allowed—how his directions had been carried out in the interval, and he approved. Then he begged her not to be unduly alarmed, for this fever was the common attendant on the catching of a sudden chill; and with similar vague words of re-assurance he left.

But the moment he had gone she sat down and wrote to her father. Fortunately Mr. Winterbourne happened at the moment to be in London, for he had come up to make inquiries about some railway project that his constituents wished him to oppose next session; and he was at the hotel in Arlington Street that Yolande knew.

“DEAR PAPA,” she said,—“We did not leave yesterday as I said we should, for the weather was so severe I was afraid to take the risk. And now another thing has occurred: my dear mother has caught a very bad cold, and is feverish with it, so that I have called in the doctor. I hope it will soon go away, and we will be able to make the voyage that was contemplated. Alas! it is a misfortune that there was any delay. Now, dear papa, you said that you were anxious to be of service to us; and if your business in town is over, could you spare a few days to come and stay at a hotel in Worthing, merely that I may know you are there, which will re-assure me, for I am nervous and anxious, and probably imagining danger when there is none? As for your coming *here*—no, that is not to be thought of; it would agitate my dear mother beyond expression, and now more than ever we have to secure for her repose and quiet. Will it inconvenience you to come for a few days to a hotel? Your loving daughter,
YOLANDE WINTERBOURNE.”

Mr. Winterbourne came down next morning—rather guessing that the matter was more serious than the girl had represented—and went straight to the house. He sent for Jane, and got it arranged that, while she took Yolande’s place in the sick-room for a few minutes, Yolande should come down-stairs and see him in the ground-floor parlor, which was unoccupied. It is to be remembered that he had not seen his daughter since she left the Highlands.

When Yolande came into the room his eyes lighted up with gladness; but the next minute they were dimmed with tears—and the hands that took hers were trembling—and he could hardly speak.

"Child, child," said he, in a second or so, "how you are changed! You are not well, Yolande: have you been ill?"

"Oh no, papa, I am perfectly well."

The strange seriousness of her face!—where was the light-hearted child whose laugh used to be like a ray of sunlight? She led him to the window; and she spoke in a low voice, so that no sound should carry:

"Papa, I want you to call on the doctor, and get his real opinion. It tortures me to think that he may be concealing something; I sit and imagine it; sometimes I think he has not told me all the truth. I want to know the truth, papa. Will you ask him?"

"Yes, yes, child—I will do whatever you want," said he, still holding her hand, and regarding her with all the old affection and admiration. "Ah, your face is changed a little, Yolande, but not much, not much—oh no, not much; but your voice hasn't changed a bit. I have been wondering this many a day when I should hear you talking to me again."

"Never mind about me, papa," said she, quickly. "I will give you the doctor's address. Which hotel are you staying at?"

He told her as she was writing the doctor's address for him on a card; and then, with a hurried kiss, she was away again to the sick-room, and sending Jane down to open the door for him.

As Yolande had desired, he went and saw the doctor, who spoke more plainly to him than he had done to the girl of the possible danger of such an attack, but also said that nothing could be definitely predicted as yet. It was a question of the strength of the constitution. Mr. Winterbourne told him frankly who he was, what his position was, and the whole sad story; and the doctor perfectly agreed with Yolande that it was most unadvisable to risk the agitation likely to be produced if the poor woman were to be confronted with her husband. Any messages he might wish to send (in the event of her becoming worse) could be taken to her; they might give her some mental rest and solace; but for the present the knowledge of his being in Worthing was to be kept from her. And to this Mr. Winterbourne agreed, though he would fain have seen a little more of Yolande. Many a time—indeed, every day—he walked up and down the promenade, despite the coldness of the weather, and always with the hope that he might catch some glint of her at the window, should she come for a moment to look at the outer world and the wide sea. Once or twice he did so catch

sight of her, and the day was brighter after that. It was like a lover.

As the days passed the fever seemed to abate somewhat, but an alarming prostration supervened. At length the doctor said, on one occasion when Mr. Winterbourne had called on him for news,

"I think, Mr. Winterbourne, if you have no objection, I should like to have a consultation on this case. I am afraid there is some complication."

"I hope you will have the best skill that London can afford," said Mr. Winterbourne, anxiously; for although the doctor rather avoided looking him in the face, the sound of this phrase was ominous.

"Shall I ask Sir—— to come down?" he said, naming one of the most famous London physicians.

"By all means! And, whatever you do, don't alarm my daughter!—try to keep her mind at rest—say it is a technical point—say anything—but don't frighten *her*."

"I will do my best," the doctor promised; and he added, "I will say this for the young lady, that she has shown a devotion and a fortitude that I have never seen equalled in any sick-room, and I have been in practice now for two-and-thirty years."

But all the skill in London or anywhere else could not have saved this poor victim from the fatal consequences of a few moments' thoughtlessness. The wasted and enfeebled constitution had succumbed. But her brain remained clear; and as long as she could hold Yolande's hand, or even see the girl walking about the room or seated in a chair, she was content.

"I don't mind dying now," she said, or rather whispered, on one occasion. "I have seen you, and known you; you have been with me for a while. It was like an angel that you came to me; it was an angel who sent you to me. I am ready to go now."

"Mother, you must not talk like that!" the girl exclaimed. "Why, the nonsense of it! How long, then, do you expect me to be kept waiting for you, before we can start for Bordighera together?"

"We shall never be at Bordighera together," the mother said, absently—"never! never! But you may be, Yolande; and I hope you will be happy there, and always; for you deserve to be. Ah yes, you will be happy—surely it can not be otherwise—you, so beautiful and so noble-hearted."

And at last Yolande grew to fear the worst. One evening

she had sent for her father; and she went down-stairs and found him in the sitting-room.

"Yolande, you are as white as a ghost."

"Papa," she said, keeping a tight guard over herself, "I want you to come up-stairs with me. I have told my mother you were coming. She will see you; she is grateful to you for the kind messages I have taken to her. I—I have not asked the doctors—but—I wish you to come with me. Do not speak to her—it is only to see you that she wants."

He followed her up the stairs; but he entered first into the room, and he went over to the bedside and took his wife's hand, without a word. The memories of a lifetime were before him as he regarded the emaciated cheek and the strangely large and brilliant eyes; but all the bitterness was over and gone now.

"George," said she, "I wished to make sure you had forgiven me, and to say good-by. You have been mother as well as father to Yolande—she loves you— You—you will take care of her."

She closed her eyes, as if the effort to speak had overcome her; but he still held his wife's hand in his; and perhaps he was thinking of what had been, and of what—far otherwise—might have been.

CHAPTER XLIX.

ROME.

It was in the month of January following, when the white thoroughfares of Rome were all shining clear in the morning sunlight, that Yolande Winterbourne stood in the spacious vestibule of the Hotel du Quirinal, waiting while her father read a letter that had just been given him. She was dressed in deep mourning; and perhaps that only heightened the contrast between the clearness and brightness of her English-looking complexion and ruddy golden hair and the sallow, foreign-looking faces around. And if the ordeal through which she had passed had altered her expression somewhat—if it had robbed her forever of the light laughter and the carelessness of her girlhood—it had left in their stead a sweet seriousness of womanhood that some people found lovable enough. It was not her father only who saw and was charmed by this grave gentleness of look, as

an odd incident in this very hotel proved. At the time of the Winterbournes' arrival in Rome there happened to be there—and also staying at the Quirinal Hotel—a famous French painter. Of course every one in the hotel knew who he was, and every one pretended not to know, for he seemed to wish to be alone; and he was so hard at work, that when he came in for his mid-day meal—which was of the most frugal kind—he rarely spent more than ten or twelve minutes over it, and then he was off again, only pausing to light a cigarette in the corridor. Well, one day the Winterbournes went as usual into the winter-garden saloon of the hotel to have a bit of lunch, for they were going for a drive somewhere in the afternoon, and they were just about to sit down at their accustomed table, when the famous artist rose from his table and approached them. He was a little man, with a boyish face, but with careworn eyes; his manner was grave, and yet pleasant.

“Pardon me, sir, the liberty; but may I present myself to you?” said he, in the queerest of pronunciations—and he held a card between his finger and thumb.

“You do me a great honor, monsieur,” said Mr. Winterbourne, with a low bow, and addressing him in his own tongue; and he managed dexterously to hint that Monsieur —— had no need of a visiting-card with which to introduce himself.

Meanwhile Yolande had turned aside, under pretence of taking off her bonnet; and the great artist, without any circumlocution, told her father what was the object of his thus desiring to make their acquaintance. He was painting a religious subject, he said, which had great difficulties for him. He had observed mademoiselle from time to time. She had so noble an air, an expression so tender, so Madouna-like! All that he wanted, if the father would grant the request, was to be permitted to sit at their table for a few minutes—to observe more closely, to find out what was the peculiar charm of expression. Would monsieur forgive a painter, who could only plead that it was in the interest of his art that he made so bold a request?

Mr. Winterbourne not only gladly assented, but was greatly flattered to hear such praise of Yolande from so distinguished a man; and so she was immediately summoned, and introduced, and they all three sat down to the little table, and had their lunch together. Yolande was in happy ignorance that she was being studied or examined in any way whatever; and he took good care not to let her know. This little, sad-eyed man proved a cheerful enough companion. He talked about anything and everything; and on one occasion Yolande had the

happiness of being able to add to his knowledge. He was saying how the realistic decorations on the walls of this saloon—the blue skies, the crystal globes filled with swimming fish and suspended in mid-air, the painted balconies, and shrubs, and what not—would shock the severe theorists who maintain that in decoration natural objects should be represented only in a conventional manner; and he was saying that nevertheless this literal copying of things for the purposes of decoration had a respectable antiquity—as doubtless mademoiselle had observed in the houses of Pompeii, where all kinds of tricks in perspective appeared on flat surfaces—and that it had a respectable authority—as doubtless mademoiselle had observed in the Loggie, where Raphael had painted birds, beasts, or fishes, anything that came ready to his hand or his head, as faithfully and minutely as drawing and color could reproduce them.

“I saw another thing than that at Pompeii,” said she, with a slight smile.

“Yes?” he said; and she did not know that all the time he was regarding the beautiful curve of the short upper lip, and observing how easily the slight pensive droop of it could be modulated into a more cheerful expression.

“I had always imagined,” said she, “that ventering and wickedness like that were quite modern inventions. Don’t they say so? Don’t they say that it is modern depravity that paints common wood to make it like oak, and paints plaster to resemble marble? But in Pompeii you will also find that wickedness—yes, I assure you, I found in more than one house beautiful black marble with yellow or white veins—so like real marble that one would not suspect—but if you examined it where it was broken you would find it was only plaster, or a soft gray stone, painted over.”

“Indeed, mademoiselle,” said he, laughing, “they were a wicked people who lived in Pompeii; but I did not know they did anything so dreadful as that.”

This was the beginning of an acquaintanceship that lasted during their stay in Rome, but was limited to this brief chat in the middle of the day; for the famous Frenchman was the most devoted of workers. And then, when he heard that the Winterbournes were likely to leave Rome, he besought the father to allow Yolande to give two or three sittings to a young American artist, a friend of his, who was clever at pastels, and had a happy knack in catching a likeness. As it turned out that Monsieur — did not wish merely to procure a commission for his brother-artist, but wanted to have the sketch of

the beautiful young English lady for himself, Mr. Winterbourne hesitated, but Yolande volunteered at once, and cheerfully; for they had already visited the young American's studio, and been allowed to hunt through his very considerable collection of *bric-à-brac*—Eastern costumes, old armor, musical instruments, Moorish tiles, and the like. It was an amusement added to the occupations of the day. Besides, there was one of the most picturesque views in Rome from the windows of that lofty garret. And so Yolande sat contentedly, trying the strings of this or that fifteenth-century lute, while the young American was working away with his colored chalks; and Mr. Winterbourne, having by accident discovered the existence, hitherto unsuspected, of a curious stiletto in the hollow handle of a Persian war-axe, now found an additional interest in rummaging among the old weapons which lay or hung everywhere about the studio.

And so we come back to the morning on which Yolande was standing at the entrance to the hotel, waiting for her father to read his letter. When he had ended he came along briskly to her, and put his arm within hers.

"Now, Yolande," said he, "do you think Mr. Meteyard could get that portrait of you finished off to-day? Bless my soul, it wasn't to have been a portrait at all!—it was only to have been a sketch. And he has kept on niggling and niggling away at it—why? Well, I don't know why—unless—"

But he did not utter the suspicion that had crossed his mind once or twice. It was to the effect that Mr. Meteyard did not particularly want to finish the sketch, but would rather have the young English lady continue her visits to his studio—where he always had a little nosegay of the choicest flowers awaiting her.

"What is the hurry, papa?" she said, lightly.

"Well, here is a letter from Shortlands. He has just started for Venice. If we are to meet him there we should start to-morrow for Florence. There isn't much time left now before the opening of Parliament."

"Then let us start to-morrow morning," said she, promptly, "even if I have to sit the whole day to Mr. Meteyard. But I think this is the only time we have ever been in Rome without having driven out to the Baths of Caracalla."

"I have no doubt," said he, "that the Baths of Caracalla will last until our next visit. So come away, Yolande, and let's hurry up Mr. Meteyard—'yank him along,' I believe, is the proper phrase."

So they went out together into the clear white sunlight.

"And here," said he, discontentedly, as they were going along the street of the Quattro Fontane, "is Shortlands appointing to meet us in Venice at the —— Hotel. I'm not going to the —— Hotel; not a bit of it!"

"Why, papa, you know that is where Desdemona was buried!" she exclaimed.

"Don't I know!" said he, with a gloomy sarcasm. "Can you be three minutes in the place without being perfectly convinced of the fact? Oh yes, she was buried there, no doubt. But there was a little too much of the lady the last time we were there."

"Papa, how can you say that!" she remonstrated. "It is no worse than the other ones. And the parapet along the Canal is so nice."

"I am going to Danieli's," he said, doggedly.

"I hope we shall get the same rooms we used to have, with the balcony," said she; "and then we shall see whether the pigeons have forgotten all I taught them. Do you remember how cunning they became in opening the paper-bags—and in searching for them all about the room? Then I shouldn't wonder if we were to see Mr. Leslie at Venice. In the last note I had from him he said they were going there; but he seemed dissatisfied with his companion, and I do not know whether they are still together."

"Would you like to meet the Master at Venice?" said he, regarding her.

A trifle of color appeared in her cheeks, but she answered, cheerfully,

"Oh yes, very much. It would be like a party of old times—Mr. Shortlands, and he, and ourselves, all together."

"Shortlands has some wonderful project on hand—so he hints—but he does not say what it is. But we must not attempt too much. I am afraid you and I are very lazy and idle travellers, Yolande."

"I am afraid so, papa."

"At all events," said he, as they were going down the steps of the Piazza di Spagna—which are no longer, alas! adorned by picturesque groups of artists' models—"at all events, I must be back at the beginning of the session. They say the Queen is going to open Parliament in person this year. Now, there would be a sight for you! That is a spectacle worth going to see."

"Ah!" she said, with a quick interest, "am I to be allowed

to go to the House of Commons after all? Shall I hear you make a speech? Shall I be in the grill—is it the grill they call it?”

“No, no, you don’t understand, Yolande!” said he. “It is the ceremony of opening Parliament. It is in the House of Lords; and the Queen is in her robes; and everybody you ever heard of in England is there—all in grand state. I should get you a ticket, by hook or by crook, if I failed at the ballot; I heard that one was sold for £40 the last time—but maybe that was romance. But I remember this for fact, that when Lord —— returned from abroad, and found every available ticket disposed of, and couldn’t get one anyhow, he was in a desperate state because his wife insisted on seeing the show; and when he went to an official, and said that, no matter how, Lady —— must and should be admitted, that blunt-spoken person told him that he might as well try to get her ladyship into the kingdom of Heaven. But we’ll manage it for you, Yolande. We’ll take it in time. And if we can’t secure it any other way, we’ll get you into the Reporters’ Gallery, as the representative of a ladies’ newspaper.”

When they had climbed up to the altitudes of the young artist’s studio, which was situated in one of the narrowest streets between the Piazza di Spagna and the Corso, they found Mr. Meteyard rather dismayed at the prospect of their leaving Rome so soon. It was not entirely a question of finishing the portrait. Oh yes, he said, he could get the sketch finished well enough—that is, as well as he was likely to be able to do it. But he had no idea that Mr. and Miss Winterbourne were going away so soon. Would they dine with him at his hotel that evening? He was coming to England soon; might he call and see them? And would Mr. Winterbourne take with him that Persian axe in the handle of which he had discovered the stiletto? And would Miss Winterbourne allow him to paint for her a replica of a study of a Roman girl’s head that she seemed rather to like, and he would have it forwarded to England, and be very proud if she would accept it?

Alas! alas! this youth had been dreaming dreams; and no doubt that was the reason of his having dawdled so long over a mere sketch in crayons. But he was not wounded unto death. It is true, he covered himself with reproaches over the insufficiency of the portrait—although it was very cleverly done and an incontestably good likeness; and he gave them at his hotel that evening a banquet considerably beyond what a young painter is ordinarily supposed to be able to afford; and the

next morning, although the train for Florence leaves early, there he was, with such a beautiful bouquet for the young lady! And he had brought her eau-de-Cologne, too, for the journey, and fruit, and sweets (all this was ostensibly because he was grateful to her for having allowed him to make a sketch of her for his friend the famous French painter); and when at last the train went away out of the station he looked after it sadly enough. But he was not inconsolable, as events proved; for within three months of this sad parting he had married a rather middle-aged contessa, who had estates near Terracina, and a family of four daughters by a former husband; and when the Winterbournes next saw him he was travelling *en garçon* through the Southern English counties, along with two Scotch artists, who also—in order that nothing should interfere with their impassioned study of Nature—had left their wives behind them.

CHAPTER L.

VENICE.

JOHN SHORTLANDS, however, was delayed by some business in Paris, and the Winterbournes arrived in Venice first. They went to Danieli's, and secured the rooms which were familiar to them in former days. But Yolande found that the pigeons had forgotten all she had ever taught them; and she had to begin again at the beginning—coaxing them first by sprinkling maize on the balustrade of the balcony; then inveigling them down into the balcony itself; then leaving the large windows open, and enticing them into the room; and, finally, educating them so that they would peck at any half-folded packet they found on the stone floor, and get at the grain inside. The weather happened to be fine, and father and daughter contentedly set about their water-pilgrimages through the wonderful and strange city that never seems to lose its interest and charm for even those who know it most familiarly, while it is the one thing in the world that is safe never to disappoint the new-comer, if he has an imagination superior to that of a hedgehog. There were several of Mr. Winterbourne's parliamentary friends in Venice at this time, and Yolande was very eager to make their acquaintance; for now, with the prospect before her of being allowed to go down occasionally and listen to the debates,

she wished to become as familiar as was possible with the *personnel* of the House. She could not honestly say that these legislators impressed her as being persons of extraordinary intellectual force, but they were pleasant enough companions. Some of them had a vein of facetiousness, while all of them showed a deep interest—and even sometimes a hot-headed partisanship—when the subject of cookery and the various *tables d'hôte* happened to come forward.

Then, one night when they had, as usual after dinner, gone round in their gondola to the hotel where Mr. Shortlands was expected, they found that that bulky North-countryman had arrived, and was now in the saloon, quite by himself, and engaged in attacking a substantial supper. A solid beefsteak and a large bottle of Bass did not seem quite in consonance with a moonlight night in Venice; but John Shortlands held to the "*cælum, non animum*" theory: and when he could get Dalescroft fare, in Venice or anywhere else, he preferred that to any other. He received the Winterbournes with great cordiality; and instantly they began a discussion of their plans for filling in the time before the opening of Parliament.

"But what is the great project you were so mysterious about?" Mr. Winterbourne asked.

"Ay, there's something, now," said he, pouring out another tumblerful of the clear amber fluid. "There's something worth talking about. I've taken a moor in Scotland for this next season; and Yolande and you are to be my guests. Tit for tat's fair play. I got it settled just before I left London."

"Whereabouts is it?" Mr. Winterbourne asked again.

"Well, when it's at home they call it Allt-nam-ba."

"You don't mean to say you've taken Allt-nam-ba for this year?"

"But indeed I have. Tit for tat's fair play; and, although the house won't be as well managed as it was last year—for we can't expect everything—still, I hope we'll have as pleasant a time of it. Ay, my lass," said he, regarding Yolande, "you look as if a breath of mountain air would do ye some good—better than wandering about foreign towns, I'll be bound."

Yolande could not answer; nor did she express any gratitude for so kind an invitation; nor any gladness at the thought of returning to that home in the far mountain wilderness. She sat silent—perhaps also a trifle paler than usual—while the two men discussed the prospects of the coming season.

"I'll have to send Edwards and some of them up from Dalescroft; though where they are to get beds for themselves

I can't imagine," John Shortlands said. "Won't my fine gentleman turn up his nose if he has to take a room in the bothy! By-the-way, my neighbor Walkley—you remember him, Winterbourne, don't ye?—has one o' those portable zinc houses that he bought some two or three years ago when he leased a salmon-river in Sutherlandshire. I know he hasn't used it since, and I dare say he'd lend it to me. It could easily be put up behind the lodge at Allt-nam-ba; and then they'd have no excuse for grumbling and growling."

"But why should you send up a lot of English servants, who don't know what roughing it in a small shooting-box is like?" said Mr. Winterbourne. "Why should you bother? We did very well last year, didn't we? Why shouldn't you have exactly the same people—and here is Yolande, who can set the machine going again—"

"There you've exactly hit it," said Shortlands. "For that is precisely what Yolande is not going to do, and not going to be allowed to do. It's all very well for an imbecile father to let his daughter slave away at grocers' accounts. My guest is going to be my guest, and must have a clear, full holiday as well as any of us. I don't say that she didn't do it very well—for I never saw a house better managed—everything punctual—everything well done—no breaking down—just what you wanted always to your hand; but I say that, this year, she *must* have her holiday like the rest. Perhaps she needs it more than any of us," he added, almost to himself.

It was strange that Yolande made no offer—however formal—of her services, and did not even thank him for his consideration. No; she sat mute, her eyes averted; she let these two discuss the matter between themselves.

"I am paying an additional £80," said Shortlands, "to have the sheep kept off, so that we may have a better chance at the deer. Fancy all that stretch of land only able to provide £80 of grazing! I wonder what some of the fellows on your side of the House, Winterbourne, would say to that? Gad, I'll tell you, now, what I'd like to see: I'd like to see the six hundred and sixty-six members of the House of Commons put on to Allt-nam-ba, and compelled to get their living off it for five years."

"They wouldn't try," said his friend, contemptuously. "They'd only talk. One honorable member would make a speech three columns long to prove that it was the duty of the right honorable gentleman opposite to begin rolling off a few granite bowlders; and the right honorable gentleman opposite would make a speech six columns long to show that there was

no parliamentary precedent for such a motion; and an Irishman would get up to show that any labor at all expended on a Scotch moor was an injury done to the Irish fisheries, and another reason why the Irish revenues should be managed by a committee of his countryman meeting in Dublin. They'd talk the heather bare before they'd grow an ear of corn."

"By-the-way," said John Shortlands, who had now finished his supper and was ready to go outside and smoke a pipe in the balcony overlooking the Grand Canal, "I wonder if I shall be able to curry favor with that excellent person, Mrs. Bell?"

"But why?" said Yolande, speaking for the first time since this Allt-nam-ba project was mentioned.

"Oh, that she might perhaps give Edwards and them a few directions when they go to get the place ready for us. I dare say they will find it awkward at first."

"I am sure Mrs. Bell will be very glad to do that," Yolande said at once. "If you like I will write to her when the time comes."

"She would do it for your sake, anyway," he said. "Well, it would be odd if we should have just the same party in the evenings that we used to have last year. They were very snug, those evenings—I suppose because we knew we were so far out of the world, and a small community by ourselves. I hope Jack Melville will still be there—my heart warned to that fellow; he's got the right stuff in him, as we say in the North. And the Master—we must give the Master a turn on the hill—I have never seen his smart shooting that you talked so much about, Winterbourne. Wonder if he ever takes a walk up to the lodge? Should think it must be pretty cold up there just now; and cold enough at Lynn, for the matter of that."

"But Mr. Leslie isn't at Lynn, is he?" said Yolande, suddenly.

"Where is he, then?"

"He had started on a yachting cruise when I last heard from him," Yolande said. "Why, we had half hoped to find him in Venice; and then it would have been strange—the Allt-nam-ba party all together again in Venice. But perhaps he is still at Naples—he spoke of going to Naples."

"I don't know about Naples," said Shortlands, "but he was in Inverness last week."

"In Inverness! No; it is impossible!"

"Oh, but it is certain. He wrote to me from Inverness about the taking of the shooting."

"Not from Lynn?" said Yolande, rather wonderingly.

"No. He said in his letter that he had happened to call in at Macpherson's office—that is their agent, you know—and had seen the correspondence about the shooting; and it was then that he suggested the advisability of keeping the sheep off Allt-nam-ba."

"It is strange," Yolande said, thoughtfully. "But he was not well satisfied with his companion—no—not at all comfortable in the yacht—and perhaps he went back suddenly." And then she added—for she was obviously puzzled about this matter—"Was he staying in Inverness?"

"Indeed I don't know," was the answer.

"Did he write from the Station Hotel?" she asked again, glancing at him.

"No; he wrote from Macpherson's office, I think. You know he used often to go up to Inverness, to look after affairs."

"Yes," said Yolande, absently: she was wondering whether it was possible that he still kept up that aimless feud with his relatives—aimless, now that the occasion of it was forever removed.

And then they went out on to the wide balcony, where the people were sitting at little tables, smoking cigarettes and sipping their coffee; and all around was a cluster of gondolas that had been stopped by their occupants in going by, for in one of the gondolas, moored to the front of the balcony, was a party of three minstrels, and the clear, penetrating, fine-toned voice of a woman rose above the sounds of the violins, and the guitar, with the old familiar

"Mare si placido,
Vento si caro
Scordar fa i triboli
Al marinaio"

—and beyond this dense cluster of boats—out on the pale waters of the Canal—here and there a gondola glided noiselessly along, the golden star of its lamp moving swiftly; and on the other side of the Canal the Church of Santa Maria della Salute thrust its heavy masses of shadow out into the white moonlight. They were well acquainted with this scene; and yet the wonder and charm of it never seemed to fade. There are certain things that repetition and familiarity do not affect—the strangeness of the dawn, for example, or the appearance of the first primrose in the woods; and the sight of Venice in moonlight is another of these things—for it is the most mysterious and the most beautiful picture that the world can show.

By-and-by the music ceased ; there was a little collection of money for the performers ; and then the golden stars of the gondola stole away in their several directions over the placid waters. Mr. Winterbourne and Yolande summoned theirs also, for it was getting late ; and presently they were gliding swiftly and silently through the still moonlight night.

"Papa," said Yolande, gently, "I hope you will go with Mr. Shortlands in the autumn, for it is very kind of him to ask you ; but I would rather not go. Indeed, you must not ask me to go. But it will not matter to you ; I shall not weary until you come back ; I will stay in London, or wherever you like."

"Why don't you wish to go to Allt-nam-ba, Yolande?" said he.

There was no answer.

"I thought you were very happy up there," he said, regarding her.

But, though the moonlight touched her face, her eyes were cast down, and he could not make out what she was thinking—perhaps even if her lips were tremulous he might have failed to notice.

"Yes," said she, at length, and in a rather low voice, "perhaps I was. But I do not wish to go again. You will be kind and not ask me to go again, papa?"

"My dear child," said he, "I know more than you think—a great deal more than you think. Now I am going to ask you a question : if John Melville were to ask you to be his wife, would you then have any objection to going to Allt-nam-ba?"

She started back, and looked at him for a second, with an alarmed expression in her face ; but the next moment she had dropped her eyes.

"You know you can not expect me to answer such a question as that," she said, not without some touch of wounded pride.

"But he has asked you, Yolande," her father said, quietly. "There is a letter for you at the hotel. It is in my writing-case ; it has been there for a month or six weeks ; it was to be given you whenever—well, whenever I thought it most expedient to give it to you. And I don't see why you shouldn't have it now—as soon as we go back to the hotel. And if you don't want to go to the Highlands, for fear of meeting Jack Melville, as I imagine, here is a proposal that may put matters straight. Will it?"

Her head was still held down, and she said, in almost an inaudible voice,

"Would you approve, papa?"

"Nay, I'm not going to interfere again!" said he, with a laugh.

"Choose for yourself. I know more now than I did. I have had some matters explained to me, and I have guessed at others; and I have a letter, too, from the Master—a very frank and honest letter, and saying all sorts of nice things about you, too, Yolande—yes, and about Melville, too, for the matter of that. I am glad there will be no ill-feeling, whatever happens. So you must choose for yourself, child, without let or hinderance—whatever you think is most for your happiness—what you most wish for yourself—that is what I approve of—"

"But would you not rather that I remained with you, papa?" she said, though she had not yet courage to raise her eyes.

"Oh, I have had enough of you, you baggage!" he said, good-naturedly. "Do you expect me always to keep dragging you with me about Europe? Haven't we discussed all that before? Nay, but, Yolande," he added, in another manner, "follow what your own heart tells you to do. That will be your safest guide."

They reached the hotel, and when they ascended to their suite of rooms he brought her the letter. She read it—carefully and yet eagerly, and with a flushed forehead and a beating heart—while he lit a cigarette and went to the window, to look over at the moonlit walls and massive shadows of San Giorgio. There was a kind of joy in her face; but she did not look up. She read the letter again—and again; studying the phrases of it; and always with a warmth at her heart—of pride, and gratitude, and a desire to say something to some one who was far away.

"Well?" her father said, coming back from the window, and appearing to take matters very coolly.

She went to him, and kissed him, and hid her face in his breast.

"I think, papa," said she, "I—I think I will go with you to Allt-nam-ba."

CHAPTER LI.

CONCLUSION.

Now, it is not possible to wind up this history in the approved fashion, because the events chronicled in it are of somewhat recent occurrence—indeed, at the present writing the Winterbournes and John Shortlands are still looking forward to their

flight to Allt-nam-ba, when Parliament has ceased talking for the year. But at least the story may be brought as far as possible "up to date." And first, as regards the Master of Lynn. When, on that evening in Venice, Yolande had imagined that he was in Naples, and John Shortlands had affirmed that he was in Inverness, he was neither in one nor the other. He was in a hotel in Princes Street, Edinburgh, in a sitting-room on the first floor, lying extended on a sofa, and smoking a big cigar, while a cup of coffee that had been brought him by affectionate hands stood on a small table just beside him. And Shena Vàn, having in vain cudgelled her brains for fitting terms of explanation and apology, which she wished to send to her brother, the Professor, had risen from the writing-desk and gone to the window; and was now standing there contemplating the wonderful panorama without—the Scott monument, touched with the moonlight, the deep shadows in the valley, the ranges of red windows in the tall houses beyond, and the giant bulk of the Castle Hill reaching away up into the clear skies.

"Shena," says he, "what o'clock is it?"

"A quarter past nine," she answers, dutifully, with a glance at the clock on the chimney-piece.

"Capital!" he says, with a kind of sardonic laugh. "Excellent! A quarter past nine. Don't you feel a slight vibration, Shena, as if the earth were going to blow up? I wonder you don't tremble to think of the explosion!"

"Oh yes, there will be plenty of noise," says Shena Vàn, contentedly.

"And what a stroke of luck to have the Grahams at Lynn! Bagging the whole covey with one carriage! It will soon be twenty past. I can see the whole thing. They haven't left the dining-room yet; his lordship must always open the newspapers himself; and the women-folk keep on, to hear whether Queen Anne has come alive or not. Twenty past, isn't it? 'Hang that fellow, Lammer!' his lordship growls. 'He's always late. Drinking whiskey at Whitebridge, I suppose. I'll send him about his business—that's what it'll come to.' Then his lordship has another half-glass of port-wine; and Polly thinks she'll run up-stairs for a minute to see that the blessed baby is all right; and we'll say she's at the door when they hear wheels outside, and so she stands and waits for the letters and papers. All right; don't be in a hurry, Polly; you'll get something to talk about presently."

He raised himself and sat up on the sofa, so as to get a glimpse of the clock opposite; and Shena Vàn—whose proper

title by this time was Janet Leslie—came and stood by him, and put her hand on his shoulder.

“Will they be very angry, Archie?” she says.

He had his eye fixed on the clock.

“By Jove,” he says, “I wish I was one of those fellows who write for the stage; I would tell you what’s happening at this very minute, Shena! I can see the whole thing—Polly gets the letters and papers, and goes back—‘Papa, here is a letter from Archie—from Edinburgh—what is he doing in Edinburgh?’ And then his papaship opens the letter—‘My dear father,—I have the honor to inform you—’ ‘What!’ he roars, like a stag lost in the mist. Why, don’t you hear them, Shena?—they’re all at it now—their tongues going like wild-fire—Aunty Tab swearing she knew it would come to this—I was never under proper government, and all the rest—Polly rather inclined to say it serves them right, but rather afraid—Graham suggesting that they’d better make the best of it, now it couldn’t be helped—”

“Oh, do you think he’ll say that, Archie?” said she, anxiously. “Do you think he’ll be on our side?”

“My dear girl,” said he, “I don’t care the fifteenth part of a brass farthing which of them, or whether any one of them, is on our side. Not a bit. It’s done. Indeed, I hope they’ll howl and squawk to their hearts’ content. I should be sorry if they didn’t.”

“But you know, Archie,” said Shena Vân—who had her own little share of worldly wisdom—“if you don’t get reconciled to your friends, people will say that you only got married out of spite.”

“Well, let them,” said he, cheerfully. “You and I know better, Shena—what matters it what they say? I know what Jack Melville will say. They won’t get much comfort out of *him*. ‘No one has got two lives; why shouldn’t he make the most of the one he’s got; why shouldn’t he marry the girl he’s fond of?’—that’s about all they’ll get out of him. Polly needn’t try to throw the Corrievreak fly over him. Well, now, Shena, when one thinks of it, what strange creatures people are! There’s Corrievreak; it’s a substantial thing; it’s worth a heap of solid money, and it might be made worth more; and there it was, offered to our family, you may say, to keep in our possession perhaps for centuries. And what interfered? Why, an impalpable thing like politics! Opinions—things you couldn’t touch with your ten fingers if you tried a month—a mere prejudice on the part of my father—and these solid advantages are thrust away. Isn’t it odd?”

The abstract question had no interest for Shena Vân.

"I hope you do not regret it," she said, rather proudly.

"Do I speak as if I regretted it? No; not much! It was that trip to Carlisle that did it, Shena—that showed me what was the right thing to do. And after you left wasn't I wild that I had not had more courage! And then Owley became more and more intolerable—but I dare say you were the cause of it, you know, in part—and then I said to myself, 'Well, I am off to Aberdeen; and if Shena has any kind of recollection of the old days in her heart, why, I'll ask her to settle the thing at once.'"

"Yes, but why wouldn't you let me tell my brother?" Shena Vân pleaded.

"Telling one would have been telling everybody," said he, promptly, "and they would have been at their old games. Now, you see, it isn't of the least consequence what they do or say—if they tear their hair out it'll only hurt their own heads. And I don't see why you should worry about that letter. Why should you make apologies? Why should you pretend to be sorry—when you're not? If it bothers you to write the letter, send a copy of this morning's *Scotsman*; that's quite enough. Send them all this morning's *Scotsman*; and you needn't mark it; it will be all the pleasanter surprise for them. When they've finished with the leading articles, and the news, and the criticisms of the picture-exhibitions, and when they've looked to see how many more ministers of the Gospel have been writing letters and quarrelling like Kilkenny cats, then they'll stray on to a nice little paragraph—'What!—*St. Giles's Church—Archibald Leslie to Janet Stewart!*'—oh, snakes!"

"But you wrote to your people, Archie," Shena Vân said, looking wistfully at the sheet of note-paper that she had in vain endeavored to fill with apologies and appeals for pardon.

"Well, yes, I did," the Master of Lynn admitted, with a peculiar smile. "I could not resist the temptation. But you mistake altogether, Shena, if you imagine that it was to make apology that I wrote. Oh no; it was not that; it was only to convey information. It was my filial duty that prompted me to writé. Besides, I wished the joyful tidings to reach Aunt Tabby as soon as possible—oh, don't you make any mistake, Shena—she's worth a little consideration—she has a little money of her own—oh yes, she may do something for us yet!"

"I don't like to hear you talk of your relations in that way, Archie," said Shena Vân, rather sadly, "for if you think of

them like that, how are you ever to be reconciled to them? And you told me it would be all right."

"And so it will, my dear girl," said he, good-naturedly. "And this is the only way to put it all right. When they see that the thing is done, then they'll come to their senses. Polly will be the first. She always makes the best of matters—she's a good little soul. And his lordship won't do anything desperate; he won't be such a fool as to drive me to raise money on my expectations; and he'll soon be glad enough to have me back at Lynn—the people there want some looking after, as he knows. Besides, he ought to be in a good-humor just now—both the forest and Allt-nam-ba let already, and Ardengreanan as good as taken."

"But I must write—I must write," said Shena, regarding the paper again.

"Well, it's quite simple," said he. "Tell your brother that, when you left Aberdeen, instead of going either to Inverness or to Strathaylort, you came here to Edinburgh, and were married, as per enclosed cutting from the *Scotsman*. The cause?—urgent family reasons, which will be explained. Then you ask him to be good enough to communicate this news to your sister, and also to send a message to the Manse; but as for apologizing, or anything of that kind, I'd see them hanged first. Besides, it isn't good policy. It isn't wise to treat your relatives like that, and lead them to think they have a right to remonstrate with you. It's your business; not theirs. You have quite arrived at years of discretion, my darling Shena; and if you don't want people to be forever jumping on you—that is, metaphorically, I mean—stop it at the beginning, and with decision. Here," said he, suddenly getting up and going over to the writing-table, "I'll write the letter for you!"

"Oh no, Archie!" she cried, interposing. "You will only make them angry."

"My dear child," said he, pushing her away, "honey and molasses are a fool to what I can write when I want to be civil; and at the present moment I should like to shake hands with the whole human race."

So he wrote the letter, and wrote it very civilly, too, and to Shena's complete satisfaction; and then he said, as he finished his coffee,

"I don't think we shall stay long in Paris, Shena. I don't like Paris. You won't find it half as fine a town to look at as this is now. And if you go the theatre, it's all *spectacle* and ballet; or else it's the story of a married woman running away with a lover; and that isn't the kind of thing you ought to see

on your wedding-trip, is it? There's no saying how far the force of example might go; and you see you began your wedded life by running away."

"It was none of my doing, Archie," said Shena Vàn, quickly.

"No," said he. "I think we'll come back to London soon; for everybody will be there at the opening of the session, and I want to introduce you to some friends of mine. Jack Melville says he is going up, and he pretends it's about his electric lighting performance; but I suspect it's more to meet the Winterbournes, when they come back from abroad, than to see the directors of the company. If they do adopt his system, I hope he'll make them fork out, for he is not overburdened with the gear of this wicked world any more than myself. Faith, I wish my Right Honorable papa would hand along the cost of that special license, for it was all his doing. But never mind, Shena; we'll tide along somehow; and when we come back from our trip, if they are still showing their teeth, like a badger in a hole, I know what I'll do—we'll go over to the West of Ireland for the salmon-fishing, and we can live cheaply enough in one of the hotels there, either on the Shannon or out in Connemara. How would you like that?"

"Oh, I should be delighted!" said Shena Vàn, with the dark, wonderful blue eyes filled with pleasure. "For I'm afraid to go back to Inverness, and that's the truth, Archie."

"Oh, but we shall have to go back to Inverness, all in good time," said he, "and it won't do to be afraid of anything. And I think you'll hold your own, Shena," he added, approvingly. "I think you'll hold your own."

And so at this point we may bid good-by to these adventurers (who seemed pleased enough with such fortune as had befallen them), and come along to another couple who, a few weeks later, were walking one evening on the terrace of the House of Commons. It was a dusky and misty night, though it was mild for that time of the year; the heavens were overclouded; the lights on Westminster Bridge and on the Embankment did little to dispel the pervading gloom, though the quivering golden reflections on the black river looked picturesque enough; and in this dense obscurity such Members and their friends as had come out from the heated atmosphere of the House to have a chat or a cigar on the terrace were only indistinguishable figures who could not easily be recognized. They, for the most part, were seated on one or other of the benches standing about, or idly leaning against the parapet; but these two kept walking

up and down in front of the vast and shadowy building and the gloomy windows, and they were arm-in-arm.

"A generation hence," said one of them, looking at the murky scene all around them, "Londoners won't believe that their city could ever have been as black a pit as this is."

"But this generation will see the change, will it not?" said his companion, whose voice had just a trace of a foreign accent in it. "You are going to make the transformation, are you not?"

"I?" said he, laughing. "I don't know how many are all trying at it; and whoever succeeds in getting what is really wanted will be a wonder-worker, I can tell you. What's more, he will be a very rich man. You don't seem to think about that, Yolande."

"About what, then?"

"Why, that you are going to marry a very poor man."

"No, I do not care at all," she said, or rather what she did say was, "I do not care aytall"—despite the tuition of her father.

"That is because you don't understand what it means," said he, in a kindly way. "You have had no possibility of knowing. You can't have any knowledge of what it is to have a limited income—to have to watch small economies, and the like."

"Ah, indeed, then!" said she. "And my papa always angry with me for my economies, and the care and the thrift that the ladies at the Château exercised always! 'Miser,' he says to me—'miser that you are!' Oh, I am not afraid of being poor—not aytall!"

"I have a chance," he said, absently. "So far, indeed, I have been lucky. And the public are hanging back just now; they have seen so many bad experiments that they won't rush at any one system without examining the others; it's the best one that will win in the end. But it's only a chance, after all. Yolande," said he, "I wonder if I was born to be your evil genius? It was I who sent you away from your own home—where you were happy enough; and you must have suffered a terrible anxiety all that time—I can see the change in you."

"Oh, but I will not have you speak like that," said she, putting her other hand on his arm. "How can you speak like that to me when it is night and day that I can not tell you how grateful I am to you? Yes; it was you who sent me; if I had not loved you before, I should love you for that now—with my whole heart. If you had known—if you had seen—what low it was to my poor mother that I was with her for that time—that we were together—and she happy and cheerful for the first time for

many, many sad years—if you had seen the gladness in her face every morning when she saw me—then perhaps you would have understood. And if I had not gone to her—if I had never known her—if she had never had that little happiness—would that not have been a sad thing? That she might have died among strangers—and I, her own daughter, amusing myself with friends and idleness and pleasure somewhere—it is too terrible to think of! And who prevented that? It is not my gratitude only, it is hers also that I give you, that I offer you. You made her happy for a time, when she had need of some kindness; and you can not expect that I shall forget it.”

“You are too generous,” he said. “It is a small matter to offer advice. I sacrificed nothing; the burden of it fell on you. But I will be honest with you. I guessed that you would have anxiety and trouble; but I knew you would be brave enough to face it; and I knew, too, that you would not afterward regret whatever you might have come through, and I know that you don’t regret it now. I know you well enough for that.”

“And some day,” she said, “or perhaps through many and many years, I will try to show you what value I put on your opinion of me; and if I do not always deserve that you think well of me, at least I shall try to deserve it—can I promise more?”

At this moment John Shortlands made his appearance; he had come out from the smoking-room, with a cigar in his mouth.

“Look here, Yolande,” he said. “I suppose you don’t want to hear any more of the debate?”

“No, no,” she said, quickly. “It is stupid—stupid. Why do they not say what they mean at once—not stumbling here, stumbling there, and all the others talking among themselves, and as if everybody were going asleep?”

“It’s lively enough sometimes, I can assure you,” he said. “However, your father thinks it’s no use your waiting any longer. He’s determined to wait until the division is taken; and no one knows now when it will be. He says you’d better go back to your hotel—I suppose Mr. Melville will see you so far. Well,” said he, addressing Jack Melville, “what do you think of the dinner Winterbourne got for you?”

“I wasn’t thinking of it much,” Jack Melville said. “I was more interested in the Members. I haven’t been near the House of Commons since I used to come up from Oxford for the boat-race.”

“How’s the company going?”

"Pretty well, I think; but of course I've nothing to do with that. I have no capital to invest."

"Except brains; and sometimes that's as good as bank-notes. Well," said Shortlands, probably remembering an adage about the proper number for company, "I'll bid ye good-night—for I'm going back to the mangle—I may take a turn at it myself."

So Jack Melville and Yolande together set out to find their way through the corridors of the House out into the night-world of London; and when they were in Palace-yard Yolande said she would just as soon walk up to the hotel where her father and herself were staying, for it was no farther away than Albemarle Street.

"Did you hear what Mr. Shortlands said?" she asked, brightly. "Perhaps, after all, then, there is to be no romance? I am not to be like the heroine of a book, who is approved because she marries a poor man? I am not to make any such noble sacrifice?"

"Don't be too sure, Yolande," said he, good-naturedly. "Companies are kittle cattle to deal with; and an inventor's business is still more uncertain. There is a chance, as I say; but it is only a chance. However, if that fails, there will be something else. I am not afraid."

"And I—am I afraid?" she said, lightly. "No! Because I know more than you—oh, yes, a great deal more than you. And perhaps I should not speak; for it is a secret—no, no, it is not a secret, for you have guessed it—do you not know that you have Monaglen?"

He glanced at her to see whether she was merely making fun; but he saw in her eyes that she was making an actual—if amused—inquiry.

"Well, Yolande," said he, "of course I know of Mrs. Bell's fantasy; but I don't choose to build my calculations for the future on a fantasy."

"But," said Yolande, rather shyly, "if you were told it was done? If Monaglen were already yours? If the lawyers had done—oh, everything—all settled—what then?"

"What then?" I would refuse to take it. But it is absurd. Mrs. Bell can not be such a madwoman. I know she is a very kind woman; and there is in her nature a sort of romantic attachment to my father's family—which I rather imagine she has cultivated by the reading of those old songs. Still she can not have done anything so wild as that."

"She has bought Monaglen," Yolande said, without looking up.

"Very well. I thought she would do *that*—if she heard it was in the market. Very well. Why shouldn't she go there—and send for her relatives, if she has any—and be a grand lady there? I have met more than one grand lady who hadn't half her natural grace of manner, nor half her kindness of heart."

"It is very sad, then," said Yolande (who was afraid to drive him into a more decided and definitive opposition). "Here is a poor woman who has the one noble ideal—the dream of her life—it has been her hope and her pleasure for many and many a year; and when it comes near to completion—no—there is an obstacle—and the last obstacle that one could have imagined! Ah, the ingratitude of it! It has been her romance; it has been the charm of her life. She has no husband, no children. She has, I think, not any relation left. And because you are proud, you do not care that you disappoint her of the one hope of her life—that you break her heart?"

"Ah, Yolande," said he, with a smile, "Mrs. Bell has got hold of you with her old Scotch songs—she has been walking you through fairyland, and your reason has got perverted. What do you think people would say if I were to take away this poor woman's money from her relatives—or from her friends and acquaintances, if she has no relatives? It is too absurd. If I were the promoter of a swindling company, now, I could sharp it out of her that way; that would be all right, and I should remain an honored member of society; but this won't do—this won't do at all. You may be as dishonest as you like, and so long as you don't give the law a grip on you, and so long as you keep rich enough, you can have plenty of public respect; but you can't afford to become ridiculous. No, no, Yolande; if Mrs. Bell has bought Monaglen, let her keep it. I hope she will install herself there, and play Lady Bountiful—she can do that naturally enough; and when she has had her will of it, then, if she likes to leave it to me at her death, I shall be her obliged and humble servant. But in the mean time, my dearest Yolande, as you and I have got to face the world together, I think we'd better have as little fantasy around us as possible—except the fantasy of affection, and the more of that we have the better."

When they got to the hotel they paused outside the glass door to say good-by.

"Good-night, dearest Yolande."

"Good-night, dear Jack."

And then she looked up at this broad-shouldered, pale, dark

man, and there was a curious smile in her beautiful, sweet, and serious face.

"Is it true," she asked, "that a woman always has her own way?"

"They say so, at all events," was the answer.

"And if two women have the same wish and the same hope and only one man to say no, then it is still more likely he will be defeated?"

"I shouldn't say he had much chance myself," Jack Melville said. "But what's your conundrum, now, sweetheart?"

"Then I foresee something," she said. "Yes, I see that we shall have to ask Mr. Leslie to be very kind, and to lend us Duncan Macdonald for an evening. Oh, not so very far away—not so far away as you imagine; because, you know, when we have all gone up to Monaglen House, and we are all inside, going over the rooms—and looking here and there with a great curiosity and interest—or perhaps we are all seated in the dining-room, having a little chat together—then what will you say if all at once you heard the pipes outside, and what do you think Duncan will play, on such an evening as that, if not *Melville's Welcome Home?*"

THE END.

Y. J. S. a



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